COMMENTARY
ON THE EPISTLES OF JOHN AND JUDE AND THE REVELATION

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EDITED BY

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HENRY A. SAWTELLE, D. D.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

For the sake of giving as much space as possible for the commentary which follows, the Introduction will be made brief. And this is the less to be regretted because there is no part of the New Testament whose authorship, purpose, and destination, are better settled among Christian students. If there is more question as to the other two Epistles, the whole matter of debate lies within a very small compass. Besides, some of the questions, which might under other circumstances be treated here, are sufficiently answered in the Introduction to the Gospel of John.

I. ITS AUTHOR.

The reasons for supposing John the apostle to have been the author of the First Epistle are abundant and conclusive. Although the name of the author does not occur in the writing itself, yet it is found attached to the early manuscript copies, which is an external testimony of no small value. Besides, Polycarp, an immediate disciple of John, quotes language from the Epistle, which naturally suggests not only its genuineness, but its Johannean authorship. Eusebius says that Papias, also a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, made use of it. Irenæus cites the Epistle as the work of John. Clement of Alexandria repeatedly does the same. This authorship is likewise indorsed by Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Eusebius. There is besides the witness of Muratori's fragment and of the Peschito. "After the time of Eusebius," says Alford, "general consent pronounced the same verdict. We must join with Lücke in saying that incontestably our Epistle must be numbered among those canonical books which are most strongly upheld by ecclesiastical tradition."

The internal evidence of this Epistle being the writing of John is also important. It has that deeply contemplative manner, that type of spiritual intuitiveness, that refulgence of the love principle, that combination of tenderness and severity, which one would sooner refer to John than to any other of the primitive Christian men whose personal character is brought to our knowledge in the gospels or in tradition. One cannot surrender himself to the deeper thought and spirit of the Epistle, or dwell meditatively upon the words and style, without a conviction coming like an inspiration that the author was one who had a wonderfully receptive and absorbing nature, and who had stood in a relation of some peculiar personal intimacy with Christ, so as to speak and think more exactly as he did than any other of his witnesses. And who of all the twelve fits into these conditions like John, the beloved disciple? Then there is the obvious and very marked similarity between the style of this Epistle and that of the gospel bearing the name of John, which we do not need to illustrate. If John was the author of the Fourth Gospel he was, beyond all doubt, the author of the Epistle.

II. DESTINATION.

Assuming that this writing is an epistle, or letter, and not a mere treatise, as its pronouns of the second person, its familiar epistolary style, and its elasticity of manner, sufficiently prove, we ask, "For whom was it prepared?" The immediate readers for whom it was intended must have been, in part at least, converts from heathenism, and persons with whose Christian history the writer had personal acquaintance. They must have been persons having already an advanced knowledge of doctrinal truth and a long experience in church life—persons situated where the gospel had been planted long enough to allow of a considerable development of positive heresies. There is evidently a philosophizing or Greek spirit in the society where the letter goes, if not on the part of the readers themselves. The letter seems designed, too, to reach not a single church, but the larger Christian constituency embraced in a circle of churches. These considerations, and others, lead us to think of the great body of Christians in the churches of Asia Minor, and to a certain extent those on the other side of the Ægean Sea, as the readers especially addressed. The letter was an encyclical epistle for the great circle of Christians, upon whom the writer looked out with personal interest and knowledge. All this agrees with the Ephesian residence of the Apostle John in the latter portion of his life. Augustine's idea that the letter was addressed particularly to the Parthians must have been a misapprehension, or others may have misunderstood him. The presence of the term in the writings of this Father is satisfactorily explained in several ways, without understanding it to limit the destination of the Epistle to a single church or locality. No other preceding or contemporary writer lends the slightest encouragement to such a view.

III. DATE.

When we have reached a conclusion as to the author and destination of the Epistle, it is easy to form a somewhat satisfactory opinion as to the time when it was composed. That it was written after the Gospel of John is generally conceded. Again and again it assumes, on the part of its readers, an acquaintance with the facts of the gospel narrative. In several instances it utters, in a condensed way, things already stated in fuller language in the Gospel. And as a rule, as Lücke says, the shorter and more concentrated expression of one and the same writer is the later. The Epistle was undoubtedly written in the last decade of the apostle's life, not earlier than A. D. 90. The assumed mature experience of the readers, the well-defined antichristian error already developed, the long-established personal relations between writer and readers, the indescribable tenderness that breathes in the letter, as of one far on in the school of Christ, together with the child-relation to the writer in which all the readers are placed, point almost certainly to the late period to which we have assigned the composition.

We leave questions of style, objects, contents, and deep inward connection, to be answered by the commentary itself.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

1 That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled

Ch. 1: 1-4. THE INCARNATION AND LIFE OF CHRIST AS A MEANS OF FELLOWSHIP AND JOY.

The language is somewhat involved, but this is very nearly its tenor. The apostle has so much to crowd into his opening sentence that he seems scarcely to know how to begin. He wants to utter the cardinal facts in regard to the person of Christ, his own sensible acquaintance with these facts, and their effective relation to the higher life of believers—all in one beat, as it were. It is the effort of a full vessel to empty itself by an insufficient outlet. No expression that Christ made was so involved, or could be. Not even inspired men could speak like him. In the verses before us, we see a deep and vivid experience attempting to put itself in sentences. The life in Christ has become life in John, and he wants to make such a declaration, such a testimony, of it as will lift up all his readers to the same plane of divine experience. He knows that in order to be successful in this object, he must at the same time guard his readers against any erroneous views of the person of Christ. Hence his emphasis and amplification of certain peculiar facts in Christ's original life and manifestation to the world.

1. That which. The thing, or substance, which he will declare. It is not merely a person, but a person as a life, fact, principle; a new power emerging in human history. Hence the writer begins with a neuter, instead of a masculine, pronoun, meaning that wonderful existence which includes so much, that source of life. **Which was from the beginning.** We understand this to mean, from eternity. The words, 'was with the Father,' in the following verse, compared with John 1: 2, confirms this conclusion; so also, indirectly, do other passages (as Micah 5: 2; John 8: 58; 17: 5; Col. 1: 17), which declare the pre-existence, or eternity, of the Son of God. Of course, John 1: 1 is the strongest warrant for our interpretation. [See Note on John 1: 1.—A. H.] The word rendered 'beginning' (ἀρχή) may mean the condition, or foundation, which lies back of all historical creation and existence (Rev. 3: 14), and from which they take their start. Prior to the existence of any created being or thing Christ was—'was,' not was becoming. With what holy reverence did John contemplate such a Being, who did not belong to the common category of men, however truly he became a man. **Which we have heard.** The writer speaks for himself and his fellow-apostles, the prime witnesses of the gospel. The statement brings forward the eternal Word to a point in time, when, clothed with humanity, or, rather, made flesh (John 1: 14), he uttered human speech which ordinary human ears could hear. A testimony to the reality of the incarnation. **Which we have seen with our eyes.** The added words, 'with our eyes,' intensify the seeing, while they show that it was not merely mental, but physical, with the natural eyesight. It was necessary for an apostle, as an original witness, to have seen Christ thus. (1 Cor. 9: 1.) A blind man could not be an apostle. **Which we have looked upon.** This is something more than to perceive with the eyes. It states that while the apostles saw Christ, they likewise gazed upon him. They examined him, contemplated him. Their eyes dwelt upon him. There was that in him which awakened rapt and admiring attention. The verb here used implies something remarkable in his person, and is expressly used with such a reference in John 1: 14, "And we *beheld* his glory." **And our hands have handled.** They had handled him, and thereby knew that he was not a mere vision or spirit, but had a real physical body, and therefore was a man. It is the strongest kind of testimony to the humanity of Jesus. No doubt John here refers particularly to his handling of the real body of our Lord after the resurrection from Joseph's

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life,

2 concerning the [1] Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bare witness, and de-

1 Or, *word*.

tomb. The humanity which he possessed before, he still had when raised from the dead. Jesus, in fact, invited this kind of testing of his bodily state. For when risen, and standing in a room with his apostles, he said to them, as they wondered and seemed to doubt: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." (Luke 24: 39.) And he requested the doubting Thomas to thrust his hand into the wound of his side, made by the soldier's spear, to satisfy him of the reality of his body. [Notice that the last two verbs of the original are in the aorist tense, and the first two in the perfect tense. This may perhaps be due to the circumstance that the last two refer to a single act, and the first two to an oft-repeated experience.—A. H.] And will not the same evidences present themselves when we shall see him as he is in his heavenly glory? Will not the hands and feet still bear the marks and scars of the crucifixion? (Rev. 5: 6.) Will not the body still be one that can be handled —real man as well as very God? This intense statement of our Lord's humanity was intended, as nearly all allow, to correct a suspicion, rising in some Christian hearts, that Jesus was not truly human, but only seemed to be so—an error which subsequently took more definite shape in the sect known as the Docetae. But take away the humanity of Jesus, make of the incarnation a mere seeming, and the whole scheme of redemption for sinners is undermined; there is no atonement, no coming of Christ into conjunction with our natures, no mediatorship, no sympathizing priesthood. The incarnation is one of the foundations of the gospel. And "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11: 3.) Nay, what can anxious sinners do? How important the fact that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us!

Of the Word of life. Respecting or pertaining to (περὶ) 'the word of life'—that is, the higher eternal nature of Christ, similarly conceived of and named in the opening of John's gospel. The expression is thrown in to make his readers certain of whom he is speaking. All the preceding statements, he says, pertain to him who, before he was heard, seen, gazed upon, or handled by men, existed under the name of the Word, and contained in himself absolute life. He was called the Word, because he was the expression, the utterance of God, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." (Heb. 1: 3.) And, as such, he was the original fountain of life—not merely of existence, but of divine, spiritual life. Before the world was, the Word had in himself that same Holy Spirit which was subsequently imparted to his humanity, not by measure (John 3: 34), to be communicated thence to all his people. The adjunct, 'of life,' literally, *of the* (true) *life*, is a genitive of nature, or characteristic. The idea expressed has its counterpart in John 1: 4. The whole expression is definitive of the opening words, 'that which' (ὃ), or may depend on such understood words as, I speak, or I write. Ebrard says it is appositional, and paraphrases thus: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, etc., we declare unto you; and thereby we declare unto you what concerns the Word of life."

2. For the life was manifested—literally, *And the life*, etc., the free Hebraic connective so common in the writings of John. The mention of the life of the Word in the preceding clause suggests to the author a fact about it in connection with the incarnation—a fact confirmatory and explanatory of what he had already said, and in truth belonging to the very matter of his message—and so it must go in at once, parenthetically, before it is forgotten. The life, belonging to the eternal Word, was manifested in a human body (John 1: 14), making possible the action and testimony of the senses before mentioned. The incarnation, bringing Christ's life within the reach of men, before implied, is now more explicitly stated, together with an important fact in the process. **And we have seen** [*it*]. The word supplied in brackets is not needed, as the object is expressed after the two following verbs—namely, that eternal life. So Lange, Lücke, Ebrard, and the Bible Union.

which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)
3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us:

clare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was
3 with the Father and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you

This testimony is not to be understood as the mere repetition of a previous statement, but as a declaration that while the apostles had seen Christ's humanity, it was not a bodily nature only which they had seen, but a bodily nature embracing and expressing the true life of the Word. They discerned in him a humanity containing the fathomless spring of eternal life. As they looked on Jesus, they saw, as it were, beneath the surface, and felt a witness that the eternal life was identified with him. Seeing him, they saw that life. He was the life. (Col. 3: 4.) They who deeply see Jesus discern the divine life in him, as well as the human. Enlightened souls have this blessed perception. The apostles, having had this complete perception of Christ, and being thus prepared in their own knowledge, went forth to the people witnessing of him, and showing that he was the true eternal life now manifested as the source and hope of eternal life to all who received him. And this witness they bore not only to the impenitent, but over and over again to those who already believed, to feed their faith and increase still further their new life. They report what they have seen and experienced, and by this means the true life is communicated and multiplied in men. They who experience a personal knowledge of the incarnation and life of Christ, become reporters, witnesses, to others, and so the vital knowledge is spread. Thus our verse presents an outline of the divine method of evangelizing the world. Living witnesses, who know Christ themselves, declare their knowledge in the Church and to the world. What we know experimentally of Christ, the life, let us report and declare. How otherwise are those about us to know the truth? **That eternal life which was with the Father.** The eternal life here is not strictly the personal word, but the life that was eternally in him (see 5: 11), and identified with him; so identified that the same eternity, the same relation to the Father, may be predicated of it or him. This is that infinite life, the pleroma of the Word; never coming into existence, but always being; which as such, or being of such nature (ἥτις), was with the Father, bearing a personal relation towards (πρὸς) him in the Word. As the Word was thus with (πρὸς) God the Father in eternity (John 1: 1), so was the life which was afterwards manifested in the flesh. Such a life must be ultimate and absolute, the basis of all other life, and its manifestation is the highest phenomenon; and being found complete in Jesus, it marks him as the most exalted Being. It is this Being who, while man, has a life reaching back into eternity with the Father, whom the apostles were declaring. It is perhaps impossible to decide whether the name Father, as used here, was applied in view of an eternal relation of fatherhood in the Godhead, or in view merely of a relation (not distinction) begun in time, with the appearance of the God-man. The former conclusion is certainly the most natural impression, from the use of language in the present instance; and if valid, implies a certain sonship of the Word in eternity. John is surely speaking of God as he was in eternity; but it is possible that he does this under a name which was given in view of the incarnation.

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. The apostle resumes the matter of statement begun in the first verse; and in resuming, after a lengthy parenthesis, he naturally repeats an essential portion. 'That which' has precisely the same meaning as in the former verse. The order of the seeing and hearing is here reversed, to emphasize the seeing as the higher evidence, the higher ground of certainty. Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles correctly insert *also* (καὶ) before 'unto you'—*declare we also unto you*—that is, to you also who have not seen and heard, that you may know the manifested One as well as we may, have the facts that we have. As the object of 'declare' is Christ in his historical manifestation witnessed by the apostles, it must refer to much more than the act of writing the present Epistle. It means, no doubt, the announcing of the story of Christ by oral communication and the written gospels, together with (note the present, or continuous tense of the verb)

and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.
4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his
4 Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that [1]our joy may be made full.

1 Many ancient authorities read *your*.

any testimony rendered or repeated in the present letter. The declaring is not effected in one way, or by one apostle merely. Having received the true light, these apostles enlightened others. (Acts 4: 20.) Suppose they had kept the great, new knowledge to themselves, what would have been the fate of the gospel? Or suppose they had spoken without experimental and certain knowledge, what effect could they have had on men? The apostles, as such, needed something more than a spiritual knowledge of Christ; they needed that knowledge which came from seeing and handling the human body, and from being with him from the beginning. (John 15: 27.) What is necessary for the witnesses of Christ now is the true inward knowledge of him. The subject of testimony, whether from apostles or from us, is Christ incarnate, and the eternal life in him. That chief matter being repeatedly declared by many men in many ways, the elect shall be brought in, and the life of the Church more fully replenished. **That ye also may have fellowship with us.** 'That ye also,' who have not seen and heard, may have fellowship with us, and so enjoy all that we enjoy. Testimony shall bring to you all that sight has brought to us; and for this purpose we make it. 'Fellowship' with another is something more than union, however intimate; it is a sharing together with a common partnership or participation of certain possessions, gifts, or blessings. Those who are in fellowship are partakers in common of certain things. It has been supposed that Paul and John differ in their meaning of this word (κοινωνία). "John's sense is more inward, subjective, than than that of Paul." (Hackett.) It seems to us that the participation, or fellowship itself, as an act, is the same with both; its objects may somewhat differ in the writings of the two—with Paul, the means of life; with John, life itself. And Paul seems to emphasize the objects, whatever they are; while John appears to make prominent the common participation itself, and the intimate union it implies between those who thus partake. With the latter, the spiritual partnership is all important, the highest exaltation. **And truly our fellowship** [is] **with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** The 'with' (μετὰ) is repeated before each person, strongly suggesting a real distinction of the persons in the writer's view. It must mean the same as in the preceding sentence—namely, in company with. The sentence is added (καὶ) to define the height of that fellowship of the apostles to which the others addressed should be admitted. It is nothing less than a participation together with Father and Son in a common life. That the object or contents of the fellowship is life in the fullest sense, is not directly said, but the tenor of ver. 2 teaches it. And fellowship with Father and Son in one great life implies perfect union and exalted companionship with them. In his deep experience of the eternal life which was with the Father, and in the Son, John was not selfish. He desired the members of the churches to share it with him to the full. They were already supposed to be converted people; but they might attain a greater fullness of blessing. It was their privilege to be on the same plane of conscious spiritual life with the apostles themselves. And how shall they attain to this grand realization? Let them receive a fresh testimony of the truth John is declaring; believe in the completeness of Christ the life; welcome the eternal life that is in him; know that it is for them. Oh, the wonder of the uplifting through the life that was manifested! The New Testament teaches that the Father has his name primarily from his relation to his only-begotten Son, and secondarily, from his relation to those who are begotten in his likeness by the Holy Spirit.

4. And these things write we unto you. By 'these things' he means these foregoing things. Compare especially 2: 1; John 20: 31; 1 Tim. 3: 14, and Ellicott on this last passage. The expression, 'these things' (ταῦτα), is used two hundred and forty-five times in the New Testament, and always, with half a dozen exceptions, with reference to

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

5 And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and
6 in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we

things preceding. The reader, coming to the word in our passage, naturally thinks of the great things just mentioned by the writer. The 'and,' introducing the statement, helps the impression. **That your joy may be full.** Fulfilled, filled up, made complete. The things just written, such as the eternity, the real humanity, the eternal life of Christ, the privelege of fellowship with apostles and Father and Son, and the testimony of these things from personal knowledge, being read and experienced, were fitted to produce supreme joy—joy, and not mere peace or happiness. A cardinal object of the ministry (2 Cor. 1: 24), and of the gospel doctrines, is to produce this joy in Christians. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8: 10.) It is the earnest of heaven, the essence of Christianity. "These things have I spoken unto you," said Jesus, "that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15: 11.) "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16: 24.) Union with Jesus in the life eternal causes in us the same joy that, like a glad stream, ever runs in his bosom. Said Augustine: "There is a joy which is not given to the ungodly, but to those who love thee for thine own sake, whose joy thou thyself art. And this is the happy life, to rejoice in thee, of thee, for thee; this is it, and there is no other. For they who think there is another, pursue some other, and not the true joy." ['*Our* joy' instead of '*your* joy' is perhaps the correct reading; for it is supported by the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts, the oldest known to critics, also by Codex L., the Syriac Version, one of the Egyptian versions, the Sahidic, and thirty cursive manuscripts. It is the more difficult reading—a copyist would be more likely to write "your" for "our" than to write "our" for "your"—and therefore probably correct. Nor is the thought unsuitable. The joy of a true apostle might well be perfected by the growing knowledge and sympathy of Christians for whom he was laboring in the gospel. (1 Thess. 3: 9; Phil. 4; 1.)—A. H.]

5-10. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IMPLIES PURIFICATION FROM SIN, BY THE ATONING BLOOD, AND PERSONAL CONFESSION.

In the preceding section, John has set forth forcibly the incarnation of Christ and his eternal life, the preaching of which is the means of bringing God's children into divine fellowship and full joy. And now, in this second section, to guard against any false view of the way into this high experience, he shows that it is not by ignoring or denying our sins, nor is it by profanely carrying them along with us; but it is by owning them as they are, and getting clear of them through the death of the Incarnate One. The sublime, joyful, fellowship contemplated by John is thus holy on both God's part and ours. There can be no union or company with a holy God except in a way of holiness.

5. This then is the message. Literally, according to the best edited text, *And* (to proceed with the epistle) *there is this message.* The reader has here John's order and words. The message is the compact proposition, basal to a scheme of salvation, and primal in all revelation, given in the last part of the verse. **Which we have heard of him.** Not *concerning* him, but *from* him. The sentence recalls the idea that Christ, having become incarnate, spoke to human ears, and John and other witnesses did hear him. The thought is involved that the Incarnate One spoke for God with authority and infallibility, making it all-important that men should hear and know what he said. **And declare unto you.** Take up (ἀνά) from Christ and announce, or report. The apostles were in the position of simple reporters from Christ. The necessity of this work of reporting or announcing the message of Christ to men is implied. Preaching to men is as necessary as that Christ should first come and originate the message. It is the line of communication between Christ who came and the ears of the world at large. **That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.** This is the message declared from Christ,—a message testifying primarily of God; a statement lying at the foundation of the plan of salvation, and introductory to the atonement—word in 2: 2. Christ came not to say that God, in mercy to men, could be indifferent to their sin or careless of the interests of right-

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:
7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship

eousness, but rather to declare his righteousness (Rom. 3: 26), and his mercy by a way of righteousness. The *locus classicus* of Rom. 3: 21–26 is an expansion of the statement of our verse. John is deeply doctrinal, not less than Paul. Let it be emphasized that the holiness of God lay at the foundation of Christ's mission. The gospel throughout, both as a system and an operation, is a voice saying that God is holy; hence that man must be holy to be with him. But it opens the way of becoming holy. God is light, morally, spiritually. Light is the one most expressive emblem of God, and was created to be such. See Ps. 27: 1; 36: 9; 1 Tim. 6: 16; Heb. 1: 3; Rev. 22: 5. It represents God's pervasiveness of being, his perfect luminousness of mind, and the bright gladness (Ps. 97: 11) of his life; but, more particularly, the perfect holiness of his moral nature. This is the special point in the mind of John, as the following verses prove. See light expressing righteousness in Ps. 37: 6. The apostle intensifies his statement by putting it also in the negative form. 'Darkness' is named, not as the symbol of ignorance, error, or misery merely, but more especially as the symbol of moral evil, sin. In God is no sin at all. Sin can have no part in him, either in a thought, or feeling, or deed, or in a way of fellowship or union with him. His nature repels all sin. He cannot countenance it, either in himself or in others. Let no man, therefore, present the gospel, let no sinner presume to come to him, in a way to compromise God's holiness or ignore moral guilt. If the passage does not purposely confute an incipient gnosticism, it guards theology against it.

6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. 'If,' here with the subjunctive, presents a supposable condition, an "objective possibility." (Winer.) 'If *we* say'—that is, I, you, or any one else. How plainly the teaching of this verse follows from the doctrine of the divine character just before laid down! With what tremendous force it comes home to any whose unholy lives, coupled with professed fellowship with God, are saying, "God is not so holy, after all!" If we have fellowship with God in one life (see note on ver. 3), between us and him there is community of character, moral likeness, and sympathy; fellowship must be mutual. Hence, for us to profess fellowship with God, while yet unsaved, or uncleansed from sin, is in effect to say that God's character is on a level with ours, and that he can have part in our sin! How many there are who are practically belying the nature of God, by thinking to enjoy God's fellowship here and hereafter, without regeneration, without moral renovation through Christ! But what does the very nature of God require? Darkness cannot be in fellowship with light. To 'walk in darkness' is to live in sin; "action inward and outward, in whatever way we turn." (Bengel.) Some specific, cherished sin may be referred to, and still the general statement remain fearfully true. Literally, 'in the darkness'—namely, that previously mentioned (ver. 5), which is totally foreign to God, but in whose sphere, or world, a Christian professor may walk, and so in a character opposite to God's. The expression is often used in these times of a doubting, comfortless state of mind, the opposite of a state of Christian hope. But the argument John is so powerfully unfolding demands the interpretation already given. Saying one thing and denying it in act, we tell a lie in both word and deed. Doing not the truth is something more than the act of lying, expressed negatively; something more than acting inconsistently. It comes nearer to being the negative expression of walking in darkness. It is the failure to express the light of God's nature in our life, the failure to do the gospel truth as the tree *does* its fruit. (Matt. 3: 8, 10, in the Greek.) Truth here does not vary essentially from its Johannean meaning, and doing the truth is well explained in John 3: 21. "That the truth (τὴν ἀλήθειαν) can mean only the substantial truth, that which in its nature is conformed to the nature of the God of light, ought never to be doubted." (Ebrard.)

7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light. If God is light, it is likewise the element in which he lives. It encircles

we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son
8 cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have

every part and point of his being. In the same sphere or state of moral light we may walk—that is, in moral harmony with God, which is righteousness; and if we do, it implies and proves two things. **We have fellowship one with another.** Saying that we have this fellowship does not prove that we are walking in the light; but walking in the light proves that we have this fellowship. Where there is the former, expect to find the latter. Who are the parties included in the phrase 'one with another'—Christians only, or Christians and God himself? We should say the latter. John is certainly arguing about a fellowship that includes God, and the walk that evinces it or denies it. Besides, the pronoun *his* in the next part of the verse most naturally supposes that the idea of God is not dropped from the present part. Nor does this view, as some aver (see Lange), put God and us too nearly on a level; since it belongs to the very idea of fellowship, as between God and us, that he permits himself to be on a kind of level with us. Wonderful permission and admission! Nor, in fact, is God brought down in the reality of this community, but the sinner rather in Christ is lifted up into the life of God. On the plane of this high fellowship of God and his people, each participates with each, and each with all, in the fullest mutuality—one with another (*μετ' ἀλλήλων*). **And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.** The best supported text omits the term 'Christ.' John meets a mental question, Have these Christians, up in this high state, no sins? Yes, says John in effect, they have sins, but the blood of Jesus cleanses them all away, so that, consciously forgiven, saved, washed, they walk in God's light; and this walking involves and proves the cleansing, as it did the fellowship. The cleansing and fellowship, too, are most intimately connected. The consciousness of the one involves that of the other; and there is no fellowship without cleansing. The blood is the atoning or sacrificial work, through faith in which (Acts 15: 9) we are cleansed from sin. Being the blood of the Son of God, it is of infinite value in canceling penalty. 'Cleanseth us from all sin' should be translated *is cleansing us from every sin.* Their importance, as bearing upon certain modern opinions, cannot be overestimated. Do they describe a work of sanctification, or of justification? Our answer is, a work of justification. A statement directly parallel we find in Rom. 5: 9, "Being now justified by his blood." The blood justifies, while it is the Spirit which sanctifies. These separate offices should be carefully distinguished. To justify a person from a sin is to free him from it, so that it is no longer his. It is more than to pardon the person; it is to take away his guilt, so that the sin is no more chargeable to him. He stands as one innocent before the divine law. Condemnation is gone from the conscience; and with it departs the sense of moral pollution. Now, does not *cleansing us* well describe this total act which frees us from the sin, utterly disengages us from it, so that it is no more ours? And is not this just the work of cleansing that is described in Heb 9: 14, and is there, as in our passage, referred to the blood of Christ? Compare, also, Heb. 1: 3; 9: 22; 2 Peter 1: 9, and especially the analogy of Lev. 16: 19, 20. The act of the cleansing is present and continuous (*καθαρίζει*), and is such at all parts of the Christian life on earth, implying that at every successive moment there is accruing sin. The continuous, erasive work of the atonement implies that there is constantly recurring sin to be erased. No sin, no cleansing. But there is cleansing, and therefore sin. At this moment, looking at the blood of Christ, I realize that I am fully cleansed, justified; but, having the remains of the old nature, sin accrues, and I need to make a constantly fresh application of his blood; and making it for one moment or many, I am conscious of complete cleansing from guilt, of full salvation. The full salvation, however continuously realized, is not a state of sinlessness. The sin constantly flows in, the irruption ceases not, but the blood of Christ meets it and cleanses us from it, giving constant victory to constant appropriating faith. The passage teaches this seeming but easily comprehended paradox, that at each moment we need salvation from sin, and at each moment we may realize full cleansing. Finally, observe that the work being done by

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

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the appropriated blood is not the taking away of the root principle of sin, but rather of each particular sin, *every sin*. The old root, whence the sin comes, is not removed by the blood; that can be met or in any measure subdued only by the Spirit. It is the guilt of sin, not the sinning nature, which the blood removes. The sinning nature may be likened to an old sore, whose continuous eruption the "fuller's soap" cleanses away, while itself remains. What Paul had the battle with was not unforgiven sin, but the sinning nature, which as a deep sore he felt to be active within him. But while feeling the grievous motions of sin, it was his privilege to feel the constant cleansing of the Saviour's blood, and so a happy victory, of which he testifies, and delightful fellowship with God.

8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. John includes himself in this statement. If after any of us are once saved and cleansed by the blood of Christ, we say we have no accruing sin needing atonement, we deceive ourselves. If the ripest Christian says he has not an active sinning nature hidden as a root within him, from which guilt and pollution will arise, needing the cleansing blood of Jesus, that man does not know himself; he is deluded. **And the truth is not in us.** The truth here is the truth of the gospel, bringing the light of God into the soul, and so revealing sins as the sunlight does the dust. See Ps. 90: 8. "The truth is to be taken objectively as the divine truth in Christ, the absolute principle of life from God received into the heart" (Lange); "the objective essence of the divine nature, which is light" (Ebrard); "true faith" (Fausset); "the truth respecting God's holiness and our sinfulness, which is the very first spark of light in us" (Alford).

9. If we confess our sins. Our method of obtaining the full effect of the cleansing blood. It is by confessing our sins (not our mere sinfulness), voluntarily uncovering them before the eye of God, which is essentially repentance. See Ps. 32: 5, 6. Such repentance is not without an element of faith and the result follows—full salvation. **He is faithful and just.** He—namely, God. 'Faithful' to his promise of forgiveness upon condition of repentance, and just inasmuch as Christ has died for our sins. (Rom. 3: 26.) **To forgive us our** (literally, *the*) **sins, and to cleanse us from all** (literally, *every*) **unrighteousness.** 'He is faithful and just' —*righteous*—for this very purpose, to this very end (ἵνα), that he should not only forgive the confessed sins, but, what is more, take away the guilt, free us from the sins, justify us, so that we stand as innocent before him. See note on ver. 7.

10. If we say that we have not sinned. The persons supposed to say this are viewed at the point when they should be offering their confession—a confession of sins beginning in the past and reaching down to the present; hence, the perfect tense. But if when they should begin to confess the sins of the time covered by this tense down to the present moment, they say, 'We have not sinned,' there is a terrible added sin. **We make him a liar.** That is, God. "We not only lie (ver. 6), and are deluded (ver. 8), but even more than that, we make God a liar. For he has said by others, and just now by me (John), that we all have ever-recurring sins." **And his word is not in us.** (John 5: 38.) His word of the gospel, as a living principle (1 Peter 1: 23), the seed of the new nature. It corresponds substantially with the truth in ver. 8, and confirms the interpretation there given. Implanted in us by the Spirit, it reveals to us our sins, and our constant need of the atoning blood.

CHAPTER II.

MY little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have

Ch. 2: 1, 2. THE WRITER'S OBJECT IS TO PREVENT SIN IN BELIEVERS; BUT HE WOULD ALSO SAVE THEM FROM DESPAIR IN CASE THEY DO SIN.

Notwithstanding the clearness of the words and style, it is by no means easy to summarize the thought of these verses. There is evidently a very close connection between them and the verses immediately preceding; and a remembrance of this will aid the interpretation.

1. My little children. The aged apostle, great in gentleness, so calls the Christians whom he addresses. He may have been led to the use of these words by many reasons: 1. Because he was a very old man, by whom even middle-aged people would be thought of as young. 2. Because he was conscious of a fatherly care and love for the disciples of Christ. 3. Because he had been instrumental in the conversion, or rather regeneration (τεκνία), of many of those to whom he wrote. Paul uses the same words for this reason in Gal. 4: 19; compare 1 Cor. 4: 15. 4. Because they possessed a humble, simple, childlike nature, after conversion (see Matt. 18: 3, 4, 5, 6, 10), which drew them to him as their spiritual guide and overseer. 5. Because in their present imperfect and dependent state, they needed to be led by further instruction into the light of doctrine and life. The term 'little' is undoubtedly expressive of endearment. And John uses the whole phrase in the most eager affectionate solicitude for the welfare of the persons to whom it applies. The phrase itself is a loving appeal and protecting assurance. **These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.** One might connect this very closely, and almost exclusively, with the last verse of the preceding chapter, and say: "That ye sin *not*"—the sin just spoken of; to wit, that of making God a liar. But beyond question our verse has a broader connection, through the expression 'these things' (ταῦτα), with the preceding chapter; and the sin sought to be prevented is more general. John had just told how men come into conscious fellowship with God. It is not by ignoring their sins, but by recognizing and confessing them, and then feeling that the blood of Jesus has cleansed away all guilt. Freed in this gospel manner from all unrighteousness, they come into holy light, and have fellowship with God. Now it is this comprehensive matter which John says he writes, that his readers sin not. And what he had thus said would tend to produce this effect. 1. Because it pointed out to them their faults and their liability to sin. This of itself would put them on their guard against sinning. 2. Because it inculcated the duty of confession, and where one is under a law to uncover his sins it makes him more careful about contracting sins which he must thus uncover and confess. 3. Because if they should thus come into the blessed sense of complete cleansing, or justification, through the blood of Christ, that very state of conscious cleansing would be the best possible preservative against subsequent sins. The consciousness of being justified from past sins is the best foundation of holy living afterwards. In fact, there is no evangelical holiness which does not spring from a sense of justification. If, therefore, says John, I can get you, through humble confession, to feel the perfect cleansing of the atoning blood, I lay the basis of a holy life in you. The remaining old nature in you is a sinning nature, but you will sin the less, you will more and more overcome, when once you feel justified. What John says is a suggestive statement of the truth, that a holy life, a sin-conquering life, can only come from a sense of pardon; that progressive sanctification is from the fountain of an ever newly realized justification. **And if any man** (ἐάν τις) **sin, we have,** etc. The term 'we' shows that the supposed case is within the Christian ranks. It is sin after one is forgiven that is supposed, and for which provision in the gospel is expressly asserted. It is as if John had said: "The aim of the gospel, as a ready means of cleansing, is not to encourage but to prevent sinning—that ye may not sin; and (καὶ) still do not be cast down if sin transpires; for while

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

an [1]Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the 2 righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins;

1 Or, *Comforter*; or, *Helper*. Gr. *Paraclete*.

holiness is your aim, though there may be failures, Christ is your friend, and he will stand for you. It is a word of animation for those who feel the holy design of the gospel and are striving to realize it, while they are painfully conscious of remaining sin. **An advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the** (better, *who is*) **righteous.** The adjective has no article, and is simply predicative. The whole expression declares a fact and doctrine most wonderful, most comforting. But only Christians can claim the fact for themselves. Christ is the Advocate of his people only. 'We have,' etc. It was so in chapter 17 of the Gospel of John; it is so in heaven to-day; it will be so at the judgment day. God the Father is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. The least sin is an infinite evil, and an infinite offense against God's nature. A sin, by whomsoever committed, has a germ of hell in it. If the work of Christ did not continue to avail for men after their conversion, their sins would consign them again to perdition, through the necessary action of divine justice. Christians need effectual advocacy to shield them after they are converted. The word 'advocate,' or *paraclete*, here used is the same which is applied to the Holy Spirit in John 14: 16, 26; 15: 26; 16: 7, and is there rendered "Comforter." In John 14: 16, the name is impliedly given to Christ as well. It belongs to one who is called to the side, or help, of another (παρά and καλέω). Obviously it fitly names the leading office of the Spirit or of Christ. Applied to the Spirit, it designates him comprehensively as our Helper, inasmuch as he takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, and as he becomes an *intercessor in us.* (Rom. 8: 26.) [Christ is our Advocate with the Father, the Holy Spirit is Christ's Advocate with us.—A. H.] Applied to Christ, it designates him as our Helper; but whose help is chiefly, and wholly so in our passage, as an intercessor, pleader, proxy, advocate, *for us, in heaven.* (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 7: 25.) Christ stands for us as his clients in the court of heaven. He is there with his atonement, and all helpful appeal and defense, on the basis of it. A priestly advocate (ver. 2), and he will clear us. We have a living Saviour, who though ascended is still working for his people. The advocacy is successful, because it is that of Jesus Christ, and of him 'righteous.' Being completely righteous, he could atone for others; loving righteousness, he would vindicate divine justice while pleading the cause of the penitent; having a righteous sense of the sinfulness of sin and its eternal judgment, he would feel the weight of the matter, and rather die than see justice sacrificed. And if he pleads, it is not on the lightness of the offense or for sentimental mercy, but with the argument of the punishment endured in himself. In all his work for sinners, Christ, being righteous, studies the interests of righteousness, and identifies himself with the cause of righteousness, and so the Father regards the advocate's plea. The advocate is on the side of the law.

2. And he is the (rather, *a*) **propitiation for our sins.** What the word 'righteous' (δίκαιον) somewhat anticipated, what is necessary to the plea of the Righteous One, is now expressly unfolded. The advocate is himself (αὐτός) the satisfaction of the sinner's penalty. What a warrant this gives the pleader! Christ did not accomplish the propitiation as a mere act, but he was, as Ebrard says, with his whole being and life a personal propitiation; and the propitiation is still a reality, forever continuing its effect in his person. As Lange says, it is of perpetual validity and operation (ἐστί). He who is a propitiator through himself is propitiation. That word has a great part of the theology of salvation in it. It is of God's eternal nature to be just. That is a fundamental proposition, standing as a base of granite beneath the whole gospel superstructure. Everything must be worked out in accord with that proposition. God is just towards sin. His nature burns with holy wrath against it. He judges it. Were it otherwise, he would not be God. And this judgment is not accidental, not contingent, but necessary and unchangeable. Now the Son of God knew this, and was in cordial, infinite sympathy with it. But was there any

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.
3 And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep

way by which a penitent sinner might be saved from this eternal judgment? Yes; by the Son of God taking the sinner's place, and suffering the judgment belonging to the sinner. So he stood as a sinner, "made sin," and received the shafts of eternal judgment. It was satisfaction of divine justice. The divine propitiousness ensues. Thus the mercy of God towards any sinner is not mere mercy, but propitiated mercy, a mercy that regards justice. This is the mercy the publican cried for. (Luke 18: 13.) Be propitious to me, he said. The entire principle is powerfully set forth in Rom. 3: 23–26. See 1 John 4: 10; Heb. 2: 17. **And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.** The whole moral world, impliedly a sinning world, considered as needing propitiation in its relation to God. The expression 'for the whole world' is a condensation of '*for the sins of the whole world*,' as the previous clause and the very meaning of the propitiation show. A brevil-oquence, Ebrard calls it, and compares John 5: 36; an *oratio variata*, Winer says, and refers to Heb. 9: 7 and Acts 20: 26. Christ is the Paraclete of his people, but the propitiation of men in general. The statement is designed to set forth the sufficiency of the atonement for any number of sins or sinners, and so relieve his readers from all fear that they might exhaust the provision before they had got rid of all their sins. John says it is sufficient in itself for each of their thousand sins (note the plural) and for each one of the numberless sins of every sinful man on earth in all time. Compare John 1: 29, where the general doctrine is similar, but the term for sin is in the singular number and collective sense. The condition of the atonement becoming effectually ours had been stated in the preceding chapter, and did not require repetition. This condition had been stated to be repentance, including confession, implying indeed faith. (1: 9.) Paul also declares that the propitiation is through faith in his blood, or made available thereby, and is wrought, in order that God might justify him that believeth. (Rom. 3: 25, 26.) The propitiation is for our sins as often as we will confess them, and not for ours only, but for any number who will avail themselves of it in the way pointed out. This ought to give confidence to any sinner in coming for salvation, and encourage any Christian in his desires and aims to be holy. In the atonement there is no lack. If there is any lack, it is in us, in not confessing our sins, and so receiving the benefit of the blood of Christ.

3–6. Obedience the Fruit and Evidence of a Loving Knowledge of God.

How shall we know that we have availed ourselves of the propitiation of Christ, have really his advocacy, and are in union and fellowship with him? The writer might speak of the evidence of an inward witness (5: 10: Rom. 8: 16), but he chooses to cite here the evidence of character and disposition to distinguish those who have entered into the true effects of the atonement, and not in mere name confessed their sins. The connection (καὶ) of the present section with the foregoing thoughts is thus explained.

3. Hereby. *Herein*, or, *in this.* **We do know that we know him.** Have come to a knowledge of him; the tense (perfect) including past and present, *have known and still know.* It is difficult to decide whether 'him,' the object of the knowing, refers to God the Father or to Christ the Son. The exegetes are much divided on the point. We think the reference is to the Son. For, 1. That is the most obvious and immediate antecedent. 2. When the keeping of *his* commandments and *his* word is spoken of in the context, it is more natural to think of the commands and word of Christ, especially after the very significant usage in John 14: 15, 21, 23; 15: 10, 14. These parallel passages in the Gospel of John decide the reference with great certainty. The express mention of God, when occasion calls for it, in verse 5, confirms our view. Nor does the change of pronoun (from αὐτός to ἐκεῖνος) at the close of ver. 6 weaken our position, since Christ is there thought of in a remote condition—namely, on earth in the flesh—and some increased emphasis is to be expressed. Of course, knowledge of the Son involves knowledge of the Father likewise, but the particular reference is to the Son. The knowing that we know denotes the coming of assurance into Christian experience. The apostle had before told us how we can

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

4 his commandments. He that saith, I know him,

come into immediate fellowship and acquaintance with Father and Son. We must take the sins that rise in consciousness, and spread them before the Lord as Hezekiah did Sennacherib's letter. (Isa. 37: 14.) Instantly the blood of Jesus is applied, and, conscious of cleansing, we enter at once into divine fellowship and spiritual knowledge. This knowledge becomes assured by certain evidence. As to knowing Christ, there is a kind of knowledge that impenitent men have, a knowledge from report. But when one through confession and atoning blood is justified, he has fellowship with the Son, and knows him personally; knows *him*, and not merely something *about* him; and knows him with the affections, with a common uniting life. When we know a fact we receive it into our minds, our being; when we know Christ truly we receive him into our minds, our being. "The object of this knowing becomes the substance of him that knows." (Lange.) Intimate knowledge, because true knowledge, the knowledge of union; the knowledge of actual taste, experience. This meaning of the word (γινώσκω) is common to John. It is a pervasive idea in our Epistle. Compare John 17: 3. Green says, when knowledge involves experience, this is the word (γινώσκω, not οἶδα) always used in the New Testament. (Eph. 3: 19; Phil. 3: 10.) Now such knowledge of Christ is more or less self-evidencing. But there is confirming evidence beyond itself. We know that we have this knowledge, **if we keep his commandments.** This is the evidence implied in the word 'hereby,' which opens the sentence. 'Commandments.' Those found in the gospel of our Saviour, including, on the one hand, the spiritual duties of Christians to each other, and on the other, the precepts which Christ gave respecting his two simple ordinances. "Love one another" is a sample of the former. "Arise, and be baptized" and "Take, eat; this is my body" are specimens of the latter. Neither the outward observance nor the inner spiritual duty, imposed by Christ, is to be disregarded. Neither is unimportant. The disciple of Jesus is certainly bound to obey one as well as the other. He has no discretion in the way of selection or variation. Christ's will is paramount as to any gospel command.

Keep. To keep the Lord's commands involves three distinct things: 1. To regard them with watchful interest and approval. 2. To guard and preserve them as something precious. 3. To do them, to obey them. The disciple is bound to exemplify the full meaning of the word, in relation to any command of Christ. (Ps. 103: 18.) Now John puts forth this keeping of the gospel commands as a proof of acquaintance with Christ. By this, in the way of deduction or inference, shall ye know that ye know him. But we think there is a further important truth implied—namely, that this keeping of the commands reacts upon the knowing act itself, and clarifies it. It is a means of becoming more definitely conscious of the divine fellowship, or of the blessing God gives. There is nothing so sure to clear away doubts from the mind as coming into practical relation to a positive command of Christ. Spiritual knowledge, at first dim and uncertain, is realized in the doing of the Lord's will, so far as we know it; according to the words in Isa. 1: 19; Ps. 119: 100; John 7: 17. It is to those who obey him that God gives clear knowledge and assurance. Some who have begun to believe, are longing and praying for more evidence of their conversion. They are in pain about it. Now let their little faith begin to act in a way of obedience to gospel commands, and they shall have their desire. Objectively by deduction, and subjectively by intuition, they shall know that they know the Lord. The light of life comes in following Christ. (John 8: 12.) By this the blessing of believers' baptism, so often testified of, may be, in part at least, understood. It is God's occasion of revealing the light of life more abundantly in the soul, according to the principle of our passage. They who will have all their light before obedience reverse the divine order, and the light professed is without its credentials. "The Gnostics, by the Spirit's prescient forewarning, are refuted, who boasted of knowledge, but set aside obedience." (Fausset.)

4. He that saith, etc. Such a person *says* what is not true. He is likewise acting a lie. He is not true to the relation in which he professes to be. Believers deny their very nature if they do not obey gospel commands. To

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and 5 the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.
6 Hereby know we that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

know the Lord, and to disregard his will, are a contradiction. **And the truth is not in him.** Not a mere repetition, in a negative form, that the person lies; but a more radical and condemnatory statement, that he is utterly lacking in the gospel principle, the new nature, the true religion. See note on 1: 8.

5. In him verily is the love of God perfected. The term 'verily' (ἀληθῶς) here means not only in reality, but also, in accordance with the principle of truth in the new man; harmonizing naturally somewhat with the similar word "truth" (ἀλήθεια) just before used. 'In him' is literally *in this one*—namely, the one who keeps Christ's word. "The love of God" is not God's love to us (Bengel), nor ours to him (Neander), nor the reciprocal love between him and us (Ebrard), nor the love commanded by God (Episcopius), but the principle of spiritual love in us which is of God as its source and as to its nature (4: 7, 8), and which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. (Rom. 5: 5.) It is God's love in us; the divine element imparted to us. It is the element of the fountain found in the stream. It is not the same thing as the knowledge in ver. 3, though the spiritual knowledge of Christ and this love of God imply and mutually interpenetrate each other, and do not exist apart, in the regenerate man. This love is perfected in us as we keep the word of Christ. It is developed, matured, completed, brought to its true end and fullness, through obedience. Evangelical obedience is the carrying out and completion of love itself. The important doctrine is taught, that the keeping of positive commands is necessary to the completeness of the inner life. The tree is not complete till it bears fruit; neither is our Christian life. Query: Is not the relation of faith and baptism in Mark 16: 16 the same as that of love and obedience in this verse of John? **Hereby know we that we are in him.** 'Hereby,' *herein*—that is, in this love, enlarged and matured by obedience, this being the thought that immediately precedes. 'In him' is in Christ. See note on ver. 3. This is according to the analogy of New Testament doctrine, that believers should be in Christ, while Christ is in the Father, and so our application of the pronouns in ver. 3 is confirmed. Being in Christ is one of the deepest facts of our Christian standing. It means vital union with him, as the branch is in the vine (John 15: 5), as the members are in the body. (Eph. 5: 30.) It is not a moral or sympathetic union; but a spiritual union, a union of life. In him and us there is one life. That life depends in in us upon the one Holy Spirit, by whom the union is effected and maintained. (1 Cor. 6: 17; 12: 13.) This union, as our passage teaches, may be a matter of assured knowledge on the part of those who have come into it.

6. Abideth in him. That is, in Christ. See John 15: 4, 6, and 1 John 2: 28; 3: 6 for plain references of this expression to Christ; also our interpretation of the pronoun in ver. 3, 5. Proof of the reference is cumulative. The term 'abideth' is the strongest assertion of the permanency of the state of union with Christ. **Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.** The pronoun referring to Christ is changed (from αὐτὸς to ἐκεῖνος), because he is for the moment viewed more remotely in his earthly life, and because it is thus that the emphatic distinction between the subjects of the verbs, between the disciple and the exemplar, can be represented. He who claims to be in union with Christ ought 'himself' (αὐτός) to walk in the path of loving obedience as that one (ἐκεῖνος) walked therein. 'That one' was in union with the Father, and did his commands. If we are in union with the Son, let us do his commands out of divine union and love (John 14: 15; 15: 10), copying the example of his own obedience in its exactness (Matt. 3: 15) and cheerfulness. (John 4: 34.)

7–11. A LEADING COMMAND TO BE KEPT BY THE CHRISTIAN, AS EVIDENCE OF HAVING COME INTO GOD'S LIGHT, IS THE ONE WHICH ENJOINS BROTHERLY LOVE.

Men have been happy, yet deceived at the same time as to their spiritual standing. There is a far more certain evidence of hav-

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.
8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you,

7 Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which
8 ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because

ing come into God's light, and that is a heart to obey the gospel commands. Following Christ, doing his word, walking as he walked —this declares the new nature, and perfects the divine love in us. The apostle having thus set the positive gospel commands in their true relation to the Christian life, it is natural for him to recall one of those commands in particular, and dwell upon its power to disclose our religious state.

7. Brethren. The great textual critics, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, substitute the word *beloved* for 'brethren,' in this place. This epithet naturally introduces some expressions on the love commandment. It recognizes those addressed as persons who have entered into the circle of the divine love, and are especially dear to God and his people. It marks John's own feeling toward them. Standing in this relation to him, he could be the surer of their interest in what he was about to urge, and of their faithful application of it. **I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.** After all the varying and elaborate opinions, written in the books, on the reference of the word 'commandment' (ἐντολή, *something enjoined*) in this place, we regard the passages 3: 11 and 2 John 5: 6 as proving that John means by it the injunction of his Lord, that we should love one another. That this command was pre-eminent in John's mind is shown both by his own writings and by tradition. See Godet, "Com. on the Gospel of John," vol. I., p. 61. His readers would be already familiar with it, and with his emphasis of it. To remind them of it, he needed not in every case to express it. The remotest reference would be understood. A particular command referred to, if not expressly named, would immediately call to mind the oft-repeated paramount one relating to brotherly love. Possibly there had been some discussion among the readers as to the proper description of this commandment, whether it should be called old or new. If so, the somewhat abrupt justification of either term is accounted for, and the readers would be all the more aware just what commandment was intended. This commandment, though often designated as new, was yet old. It was no recent innovation, no novelty; but was prominent in the earliest preaching that had come to the churches. From the beginning of their acquaintance with the Christian message, they had had before them the love commandment. It was therefore old; not in the sense that the earth and the skies are old; but in the sense that the message of the gospel was already long familiar. Christ himself had said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." It was his particular injunction, and ever since his day, for scores of years, it had been echoing through the churches. **Which ye have heard.** This suggests how they had come into possession of this sweet law of Christ. It was not their discovery, but a revelation, a testimony, brought to them by the apostles. They heard it from without, when they began their life in the faith. The repetition of the words, 'from the beginning,' at the close of the verse, should be omitted.

8. Again, a new commandment I write unto you. The word 'again' is simply the introduction of another form of statement. "I have stated," says the writer, "that the command is old; but again I have to say that it is new as well. Jesus himself so entitled it." (John 13: 34.) "And I do not wish"—so John would say—"to deny the lasting name he gave to it. On the other hand, I would retain the precious name, and all that it means." When we consider John's union of thinking with his Lord, his authorship of the gospel bearing his name, and the undoubted familiarity of his readers with his Lord's precepts, it seems impossible to suppose that the new commandment here can be other than that named in John 13: 34. Neither John nor his readers could think of anything else when that expression was employed. How common to the line of New Testament thought is the precept relating to brotherly love may be understood by consulting John 13: 34, 35; 15: 12, 17; Rom. 12: 10; 13: 8; Eph. 5: 2;

which thing is true in him, and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.
9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.
9 He that saith he is the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now.

1 Thess. 4: 9; 1 Peter 1: 22; 2: 17; 4: 8, and the many references in John's Epistles. Why is it called a 'new' commandment? Because it inculcated, as no previous commandment had done, a duty founded on the exclusive and peculiar relation of Christians to each other as spiritual kinsmen of Christ, children of the new birth, and members of God's elect family. The general duty of love from man to man, the neighborly and benevolent feeling that all men should have towards one another, had been long since enjoined. This commandment was as old as the law itself. But the peculiar love which the regenerate have for each other, through the promptings of the new life of Christ in them—such love, in fact, as Christ had for his own disciples, as distinguished from others—was first brought to light as a distinct duty, and made the subject of a command in the Gospel Dispensation, and within the gospel sphere. As Christ's feelings towards his own were different from those he felt towards others, and as members of the same earthly family feel towards each other an interest and affection which they cannot feel for others, so will Christ have the members of his spiritual family cherish the family interest and affection which their new relation of kinship calls for; and the command expressing this will is a new command. Brotherly love, in the meaning of Christ and his apostles, is the family grace. Christ first announced it, enjoined it. A fresh commandment indeed, marking the New Dispensation, and the intimate kinship of the redeemed people under it. It is something of which the world knows nothing. It is new with Christians. **Which thing.** Not the commandment, but that which is predicated of it—to wit, its character of newness; or, it may be, the fact that it was a new one. **Is true.** Is realized and fulfilled; becomes actual truth, a feature of the truth system, reflecting God's own nature of light. **In him.** In Christ; in him who gave the new commandment. The pronoun 'him,' introduced as it is, without any expressed antecedent, indicates that the writer's mind is full of the thought of Christ in connection with the new commandment. And what new commandment should so readily connect itself with Christ, in the mind of John, as the command to love one another? Hence this is the one which most naturally falls into our verse, though unexpressed. Its character of newness is true in him, since he first realized it in his peculiar love to his people; and it was true in the disciples addressed, since they were among the first to realize it among themselves. They and he had tested it, and knew it. With them the new commandment was fulfilled as a reality; they were its living examples; it was new in them. **Because the darkness is past** (or, *is passing away*) **and the true light now shineth.** It is time, therefore, for the new commandment, and to expect its illustrations in Christ, and in a people related to him. It is time for the realization of what has just been said of it. It corresponds to the period. The gospel day has been opened. Christ has come, the light of God, the shining holiness of God himself; and now all that believe in him partake of that light. The new life, by the Holy Spirit, abounds. It works, it must work, in the way of brotherly love. Where light is there is love, in God's nature, in man's. And in so far as God's light comes, moral darkness flees away. The true light is the genuine, ultimate light, of which all other is the type. Compare the true vine in John 15: 1. On 'light' and 'darkness,' see note on 1: 5. It is remarkable that in the Sanscrit, Greek, Latin, Teutonic, and Celtic tongues, God is named from the day, sky, or shining light.

9. He that saith. His *saying* does not weigh or prevail against the moral fact. Profession against truth is lighter than air. **He is in the light**—in the light of God's nature—that is, regenerate, a child of light. "In the community of light." (Ebrard.) **Hateth his brother.** The brother here is one's Christian brother, a kinsman in Christ, a fellow-partaker of the light-nature; and hence the object of the peculiar love prescribed in the new commandment. This command, as we have seen (ver. 8), is for the children of God. "It prescribes the affec-

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.
11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

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tion which Christians are to entertain towards each other as distinguished from other men." (Hackett, MS. notes.) However benevolent and kind the world's people are, they know nothing, experimentally, of the brotherly love of the community of light. But the Christian *must* know it, and exercise it toward a brother, else he denies his professed light-nature. If he lives in a state of hatred towards a brother, he is outside of the light of God, which is also his love. He denies the very love-nature of God. He has no recognizable evidence of being a child of light, a converted man. See 3: 14. How shall we love God, and not be in union with our kind? Hatred belongs to the region of darkness, foreign to God, the realm of sin. In ver. 3 John had applied the commandment test in general. He now applies a particular command—namely, the new one, and judges a Christian by it. **Until now.** Though gospel light has been shining many years, yet through it all, up to this very moment, and notwithstanding whatsoever profession, that man is in his sins. In the Greek, the word for 'darkness' has the article prefixed, as is usual with familiar abstract nouns. See T. S. Green's "N. T. Grammar," p. 16.

10. He that loveth his brother. With the peculiar love required in the new command—a love like that of Christ to his own. The converted do have a peculiar love to Christians; a tenderness, a spirit of forgiveness and forbearance towards them, a delight in them, a feeling of union with them utterly inexpressible. **Abideth in the light.** Abides consciously in it, through the cherishing of this love. He has the evidence of being in God's light, and realizes it. It is perhaps suggested that one way of losing this evidence is to neglect or violate brotherly love. Such neglect or violation destroys one's good feelings, corrodes the new life, kills the sense of fellowship with God, damages and darkens the whole religious life, and must dissipate Christian evidence. But if brotherly love continue, the sense of God's love continues. It is a great thing to *abide* in the sense of union and communion with him. **There is none occasion of stumbling in him.** There is not a stumbling-block (σκάνδαλον), an offense, in him—that is, in the one who loves his brother. There is nothing in him to cause himself or another to fall. He may have faults, but they will be so covered (Prov. 10: 12; 1 Peter 4: 8) or neutralized, or extenuated, by the presence of superabounding love, as to do little harm, and it will make easy the overcoming of offending things. A consistent life is easy where love is. But how the harboring of the spirit of hate towards a brother affects unfavorably, not only the person who persists in it, but others around him, both saints and sinners, while it lends to his other faults a doubly offensive power!

11. Is in darkness and walketh in darkness. (John 11: 9, 10; 12: 35.) Not only is the hater of his brother in the darkness of sin and error personally, but all his movements and ways in religion are those of a man who walks in the dark. There is not the firm tread, the confidence, the decision, the ease, the clearness of view, the straightness of course, of one who walks in the light of day. The groping, blind man is his picture. How he feels his way! how uncertain his gait! how little prepared to avoid the flying arrow! How solicitous we are as he nears the edge of danger! He is at the mercy of circumstances. He cannot command himself. Such is the image of one who allows any unrepented sin, but particularly that of brotherly hatred, to lie upon his heart, plunging him into darkness. **Knoweth not whither he goeth.** (Eccl. 10: 15.) He cannot see his own path; he cannot see ahead; is uncertain where he will bring up at last; cannot tell exactly where he is. Why is this so? The last clause answers. **Because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.** *Blinded*, not 'hath blinded,' is the exact sense. Blinded them at the first sin, though the state then begun, has continued. Nothing is more blinding to the spiritual eyesight than hatred. It will take away one's power of discerning the right and truth of a case. He will be blind to whatever is redeeming in the one he hates. He cannot perceive the foolishness and inconsistency of his own

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

12 I write unto you, *my* little children, because your
13 sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write

conduct. How poor a figure he cuts! He seems to be blind to the spirit of the gospel and the mind of Christ. He seems to be blind even as to the nature and duty of brotherly love itself. Besides, his vision of the true meaning of God's word is necessarily impaired. The whole result accords with reason and experience as well as with Scripture. Let us be afraid of this darkening sin. It is interesting to note John's habit of circling his thoughts about great pairs of principles, or moral states—pairs of opposites which are mutually exclusive, and which do not admit of any middle ground or mean, such as light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hatred, life and death, the spirit and the flesh, love of the Father and love of the world. Between these principles or states in a given pair, there is no compromise, no intermingling. (2: 21.) They are strict alternatives. Alliance with one is the denial of a part in the other.

12–14. FACTS IN THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF HIS READERS, WHICH ENCOURAGE THE APOSTLE TO WRITE TO THEM AS HE DOES.

John has developed a system of experimental doctrine, reaching a life reflecting the light of God's nature. Confessed sin washed away in Christ's blood; then conscious fellowship with God; then obedience, running especially in the line of the love-command. A wonderful exposition of the law of the new life! There is presented the new life in its principle, method, and outworking—its principle, union with God; its method, forgiveness of sins through Christ; its outworking, obedience and love, especially brotherly love. And now, having completed this portrait of the new kingdom, and applied it in a way to test severely the spiritual standing of his readers, the writer deems it meet to offer some words of confidence (as Heb. 6: 9) and commendation, causing them to feel that it is from no distrust of their attainments that he writes as he does, and thus saving them unnecessary despondency.

12. I write unto you. In relation to the love-duty as testing their spiritual standing—the great matter occupying his heart and pen when he begins this verse. **Little children** (τεκνία). A name of endearment, applied here by the writer to the whole circle of his Christian readers, and recalling their new birth and their childlike attributes. See note on 2: 1, and this obvious application of the word in 2: 28; 3: 18; 4: 4; 5: 21. **Because your sins are forgiven you.** True of all the Christians whom the apostle addressed. They had been forgiven, and still were a forgiven people. The assurance of this made them seem very near to the old apostle, and made writing to them a great pleasure. He had confidence in them, and therefore, with the less misgiving, could lay all the demands of the gospel, all the tests of the new life, upon them. His confidence set his pen free. The Christian pastor knows what it is to preach the great testing doctrines freely under such circumstances. And this strengthens and fortifies the good Christian against an evil day. How much more heartily, and no doubt usefully, we can preach these things, when we have confidence in the Christian character of our people, and can say so, as John did! We learn, too, that even a people walking with God needs thorough gospel teaching. What a great fact to declare concerning any of the race of sinners: 'Your sins are forgiven you'! There is such a thing as full forgiveness of sin, and John's great, endeared flock knew what it is. **For his name's sake**—literally, and with clearer meaning, *through his name.* [Rather, "on account of his name," and the name represents the person. Christ, before described as "a propitiation of sins," is here affirmed to be the ground, reason, or motive of forgiveness. And this is evidently the meaning which the author has in mind, but has not clearly expressed by the word "through." The expression is of great doctrinal significance.—A. H.] This language carries back the mind to the method of forgiveness announced in 1: 7 and 2: 1, 2. The obvious reference is to the name of Jesus Christ, who bore in himself the punishment of sin, and for whose sake God can look propitiously on each penitent soul; the name symbolizes the atoning work wrought under that name. John says '*his* name's sake,' without giving the name, because the name by which they were saved

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. [1] I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the

1 Or, *I wrote.*

was already so deep in their knowledge and love.

13. Fathers. Having designated his readers generally by the name of 'little children,' and predicated of them the blessed fact of the forgiveness of their sins through Christ, the writer now gives more particular emphasis to his confidence by addressing them in classes according to their age, and affirms great things of either class. At the same time he wishes to forestall any possible idea of depreciation connecting itself with the name of 'little children.' You are, he would say, indeed 'little children' in your new life, humility, and relation to my heart; but in respect of strength and maturity you are men —**fathers** ripe in knowledge, **young men** strong in grace. **Ye have known him that is from the beginning.** Namely, Christ, who, though he had come in the flesh, lived in his divine nature in the beginning with God himself. (1: 1; John 1: 1.) Him who from everlasting was in union with the Father, they had come to know, and were by him raised to divine fellowship, and made partakers of the eternal life in him. To know Christ in the Johannean sense is something very deep and far-reaching. See note on 2: 3. In this knowing, we are vitally identified or united with that which is known; we are conscious of the new life, the divine union and fellowship. There is something powerfully uplifting in this experience. In it there is a knowing of Christ, not only in his death, but as a Divine Saviour with eternal life in himself. This knowledge the 'fathers' had. **Young men.** Christians in their early manhood, a prominent class in the churches within the eye of John. He testifies that they had a vigor of Christian experience, an athletic activity, at the farthest remove from childlike weakness. They had his highest confidence. **Because.** For the causal significance, see note on ver. 12. **Have overcome the wicked one.** The word 'overcome' (νικάω) is Johannean; being used sixteen times in Revelation, six times in our Epistle, and only four times in the rest of the New Testament. The victory affirmed here corresponds well with the peculiar temptations of those in early manhood. Nearly all understand the wicked one (τὸν πονηρόν) to mean the devil, or Satan, the tempter, whose badness is so pervading that he is altogether bad. (5: 12; 5: 18; Matt. 13: 19; Eph. 6: 16.) There is victory over this strong one and the sin which he fosters. The young men had achieved it. They had done so by coming to a knowledge that their sins are forgiven, and to a consciousness of union with God. The victory implies this knowledge and union. Up to the point of such knowledge and union, Satan makes a terrible fight to possess the soul. He holds it in darkness and bondage while he can, and has power over it till it comes into the knowledge and liberty of Christ. But when that great point is reached Satan is conquered. He is not slain. He does not cease to tempt. His buffetings are often severely felt. But he is no longer owner or master. And how shall one continue his victory over Satan but by living always in the conscious acceptance of Christ? While the justifying blood renders the soul happy Satan is overcome. The young men, then, were prevalent on the basis of a gospel experience. That is the source of strength to the spiritual athlete. **I write** (*wrote*, or *have written*, ἔγραψα, aor., not γράφω, pres.,) **unto you.** All modern critics of the sacred text give us this tense of the verb. We suppose the present tense got into use from an idea that the second-named 'little children' (παιδία not τεκνία) were literally in their age child-Christians, to be co-ordinated with the two preceding classes of 'fathers' and 'young men.' This idea naturally conformed the tense of the verb, introducing a supposed third class to that of the verbs introducing the other two classes in the category; and the same idea held the whole sentence to ver. 13, instead of allowing it to introduce, as it should, ver. 14. But the manuscript authority demands the aorist form; and that indicates that the little children here addressed do not form a third class with the two preceding classes in a division of age.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

14 Father. [1] I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. [1] I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have
15 overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither

1 Or, *I wrote.*

The change in tense introduces a new series of statements, a going over the whole matter in a changed relation of time or point of view. Why the past tense? Beza, Düsterdieck and Hackett say it is the epistolary aorist, the writing being for the moment thought of as already in the reader's hands. Others think it refers to the former part of the Epistle. The first view seems forced, and the passages cited are doubtful parallels. The second view misses the fact that the thrice-repeated 'write' relates to matter just written, and indeed to the very essence of the doctrine enunciated up to this point. We think the verb in the past tense relates to the very same matter that it did in the present tense. But that matter is viewed as a little more remote from the writer, a little farther back in the past, owing to the time elapsed since he began writing at ver. 12, or, more likely, owing to an interruption in the writing. **Little children.** The disciples in general are thus addressed by John. Here the Greek word (*παιδία*) is different from that rendered 'little children' before, but it means essentially the same as the other. See Matt. 18: 3, 5; John 21: 5; and note on ver. 18. It is simply a lively verbal variation. Alford and Lange maintain our view in the interest of harmony of structure and parallel correspondence in the two series of sentence. **Have known the Father.** What had been said of the spiritual knowledge of the fathers, in the former part of the verse, is true of all the disciples; knowledge of the Father and Son being essentially one.

14. He repeats his confidence in his readers, not only as a whole, but in classes. The repetition is made, because it was very pleasant to John, and it is for the sake of deepening the assurance and enlarging the testimony at some points. This testimony to the decided spiritual character of his readers is still rendered, because his testing words in relation to love and light, hatred and darkness, might seem to cast doubt upon their state. He writes, or wrote, not because he doubted them, but for the very reason that he believed well of them. Their true spiritual character encouraged him to write most searchingly and most radically. And there was the greater pleasure in writing to such as they, because they would appreciate his divine doctrine. **Because ye are strong.** As John is setting forth spiritual and not natural endowments, there can be no doubt that he testifies here to the spiritual strength of the young men, which was so appropriate at the same time to the more active period of their lives. This strength came from their sense of joyous union with the Lord. (Neh. 8: 10; Eph. 6: 10.) This is the way of strength to young and old. Strength is the unfailing product of a joyous experience of God's love—strength to do, to bear, to hold up the Saviour's name, to cope with Satan and all adversaries. **The word of God abideth in you.** Their birth into the light of God's nature synchronized with the entrance of God's word into their hearts. (Ps. 119: 130.) This word is that of the gospel, the truth of salvation by confession, and the blood of Jesus. This word became living in their regeneration. The word thus planted abides. It is no temporary principle. In it there is the principle of obedience on the one hand, and steadfastness against error on the other. All this was exemplified in those young men. And so they were victors in the contest with the wicked one.

15–17. THOSE WHO ARE FORGIVEN AND UNITED TO GOD MUST NOT LOVE THE WORLD.

Having written faithfully (3-11) to such a people as his readers were, the apostle can now warn them, and all the better, because of the confidence which he has in them and which he has just now expressed. He warns them against the worldliness which will tempt them, though so utterly foreign to their new life. They are indeed washed from their sins, are in conscious divine fellowship, are victorious over the wicked one, have the word of God abiding in them, but they are not yet taken out of the world, are still surrounded with evil, and the remains of a lustful, covetous, proud nature, are still within them. Forgiven are they, but not yet away from the scene or danger of sin. They are in the world

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

and in the flesh. Hence the need of earnest caution. Having such great and glorious things said of them as John had been saying, thay might be tempted to forget their intimate connections with a worldly existence and a fleshly nature. They might imagine that with their divine attainments they could not fall into evil; that they were above temptation and worldly influence. Not so; "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10: 12.) The freeing of the soul from guilt, and its elevation into the plane of God's light, do not annihilate the sinful nature. A happy spiritual attainment must not foster spiritual pride or vain confidence. There is still a law of the flesh warring against the law of the renewed mind. The new life is a plant in the midst of tares. The recognition of this fact will keep the most rejoicing Christian humble and cautious.

15. Love not the world. "Do not continue to cherish that affection so natural to men. A negative command in the present (μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε) forbids an act already begun; in the subjunctive aorist, warns against one not yet begun." (Hackett.) 'The world' here means not only the sinful ways of the world, but all objects and concerns considered as divorced from God, and as an end in themselves. It includes all that may receive attention, and become an idol to our hearts, in place of God. In the unforgiven man, worldliness is the governing principle. He loves the objects of nature, or the walks of science, or the acquisition of wealth, or the displays of fashion, or honor from men, or pleasures of society or business or family, or his own thoughts and self, better than he loves God or his will. He is absorbed in the things of this life. The world is his thought, life, and love; his great idol, to which he has surrendered himself, and now gives his strength. But having received the new life, he must cease to give this supreme place to the world, and take God into his mind and heart. He is known by the object he makes supreme, by that which his life as a totality serves. It is implied that men, from their very nature, must love something supremely. Which shall it be, God or the world? We cannot serve two masters. We cannot give our affection to the world as an end in itself, and at the same time love God as God. "But," says one, "am I not to love the world at all?" No; not as something outside of God. (Col. 3: 2; Rom. 12: 2.) You may love the beauties of nature, your own family, food and raiment, etc., in subordination to your love of God, and for his sake. It is your duty to do it; and thus doing, this world will help you to love God the more. There is a loving of the world in benevolence, to do it good, that is even God-like. (John 3: 16.) **Neither the things that are in the world.** One might claim to have given up the world as a whole, and yet cling too fondly to some one object of gratification, like Ephraim. (Hosea 7: 8 seq.) John foresees this danger, and so changes his expression from the general to the particular. One may have this idol; another, that. Let each avoid his particular idols, his peculiar indulgences. **If any man love the world.** As a sphere by itself, and for itself. **The love of the Father is not in him.** The love which has the Father for its object. The relation of the words in the conditional part of the sentence, and the alternative reasoning, call for this explanation. Here John's method of holding up two mutually excluding principles or spheres is strongly illustrated. See under ver. 11. If one love the world supremely, if worldliness is his life, his governing principle, he is not a Christian; that is all. He worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator. He cannot hold a filial relation to his Father in heaven, and treat him as a Father when immersed in any earthly idolatry. God will not give his glory to another; will not divide it with any mundane good or gratification. For God's claim, especially as a *Father*, see Mal. 1: 6. For the same alternative principle, on which John reasons, see Matt. 6: 24; Rom. 8: 5, 7; 2 Cor. 6: 15; Gal. 1: 10; James 4: 4. In this connection it is interesting to compare Paul's contrast of the two covenants, and his statement of the mutual exclusiveness of the systems of works and of grace. If one, then not the other. See Godet, "Com. on Luke" 5: 36–38, for an exposition of Christ's

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
17 And the world passeth away, and the lust there-

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is
17 not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:

thought of the exclusiveness of the old life and of the new.

16. The design of this verse is to illustrate and confirm (ὅτι) the strong assertion just before made concerning the utter incompatibility of the love of the world with the love of God. They belong to opposite spheres; they come from wholly different fountains. One is from beneath; the other from above. One is spiritual; the other fleshly. In order that Christians may better see what the love of the world is, the apostle gives specimens, or instances, of the various forms it takes. Some have thought that he intended to supply an exhaustive analysis, or description, of it. But it is only, as we think, leading exhibitions of it that he puts before us, sufficient to show its essentially grovelling and selfish nature. The writer has spoken of the objects of selfish love in the world. These objects are now singularly identified with the love itself, in the forms of lust and pride, and as such they are foreign to God. They take the character of one's selfish desire, and become of a piece with it. Or a worldly love, in the forms of lust and pride, having its end and scope wholly in the world, is put among its own objects as a part of the world, and hence foreign to God. The latter account of the case is more simple than the former. Either account explains the easy gliding of the writer's mind from the objects of love in the world to the desires which they awaken. The object and subject are a virtual unity. **The lust of the flesh.** The lust prompted by the flesh. (Gal. 5: 17.) The word 'lust' (ἐπιθυμία) here, and in the next phrase, means *longing desire*, considered as inordinate. The various appetites of the bodily nature are intended. The love of the world in some is shown by seeking as their chief good the gratification of their appetites. (Phil. 3: 19.) And here comes to view the drunkard, the glutton, the epicurean, the libertine, in their various stages. **The lust of the eyes.** What is the relation of the eyes to the desire? It is subjective. The eyes are the exciting cause or occasion of the desire. This desire is less animal and more intellectual than the former, yet no less sinful when gratified for its own sake. This form of worldly love finds supreme pleasure in those things which gratify the outward sight, such as raiment, fashion, fine horses and chariots, palaces and furniture. Nor are those things which gratify the inward sight excluded. If one lives merely to gratify his intellect in systems, problems, philosophies; if he seeks art or science for their own sake only, and not with the higher end of loving and serving God, then is he as really, as supremely a lover of the world, as the devotee of dress. **The pride of life.** 'Life' (βίος) is not the vital principle (ζωή), but rather the manner, course, and circumstance of living; one's worldly state, or attainment. It becomes the exciting cause or occasion (subjective genitive) of pride. This pride is the boastfulness, swagger, vanity, ostentation, self-gratulation so prominent with some people. It finds ample means and occasions. How it grows upon one when indulged! How plain that he loves the praise of men more than the praise of God! This world is to him the means and theatre of vanity. His mind is filled with himself, and not with his God. Unlike Paul (Gal. 6: 14), he glories in the show of this life. All this "threefold concupiscence" (Augustine), now considered, is strikingly brought to view and illustrated in the tempation of Eve (Gen. 3: 6), and in the temptation of our Lord. (Luke 4: 3-11.) **Is not of** (ἐκ) **the Father, but is of** (ἐκ) **the world.** Has its origin in the carnal nature, in the plane of this world, not in the Father; for the mind that springs from him is directed to him. He in whom worldly love prevails is not one of the children (τεκνία) of the Father. His circle of life differs as much from the life of a child of God, as the whirl of a top differs from the orbit of the sun. A man is to be judged by his prevailing desires. "John grasps down to the very foundations of moral life, when he reminds his readers of the essentially distinct origin of the love of the world and the love of God. The inmost kernel of the matter is laid bare." (Düsterdieck.)

17. And the world passeth away. Another reason why we should not love the

of: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.
18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have

but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.
18 Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard

world: Worldliness is not only totally outside of God (ver. 16), but it is, as to both its objects and its desire, transient and perishing. (1 Cor. 7: 31; James 4: 14; 1 Peter 1: 24.) The passing away is not annihilation, but rather a passing along or by. It describes the act of passing off the stage, or the breaking up of a scene, in a play. In our passage, it describes the breaking up of the present order and state of things. Selfish desires and their objects will soon cease to hold their present relations, passing on and over into darkness, disappointment, and ruin. The Cosmos, the worldly order, will be broken, and for the godless soul nothing will take its place! Nothing but a disordered, dark, fragmentary state, utterly hopeless! **But he that doeth the will of God.** This is the one who loves God. (Ver. 3, 5; 5: 3; John 14: 15.) The love of God appears in its completest form when it is seen doing his will. Herein is the rounding out, the demonstration of our divine love. **Abideth forever.** Observe the present tense. He has already entered into that divine order which will not be broken up, but will increase more and more. He is united to him who passes not away. He is delivered from a perishable system. He carries with him through death and every possible shock the unchanging object of his love. The Christian will have his present God, but the sinner will not have his present world.

18–23. Attention is called to the Existing Antichrists.

The apostle has warned the members of the churches against the sin of worldliness. It was an evil of the heart to which every one of them was liable. Hence the need of the best saint walking cautiously, humbly. Having warned the obedient against the evil lurking in their own hearts, it is natural for the writer to pass next to a form of hostile influence that they must encounter in other men, even in those who claim the name of Christians, but who in reality deny Christ, and in heart are opposed to him. God's true children must be on their guard, not only against a love of the world in themselves, but against the wolves in sheep's clothing, who, professing to be Christians, teach doctrines which in effect destroy Christ. These are the hardest, most subtle, foes Christianity has to battle with, those who pretend to receive it, and at the same time are undermining it with their errors. Open infidels, opponents laying no claim to the Christian name, are not half so dangerous. The Christian religion has had more to suffer from those professing the gospel and at the same time perverting it, than from all the world besides.

18. Little children. This term (*παιδία*), the same as in ver. 13, applies figuratively to all the true saints, with reference especially to their dependence, their need of care and warning, and their pupil state. The other term for 'little children' (*τεκνία*, ver. 12), as applied to Christians, seems to suggest more their new birth and spiritual character, though the two terms practically cover very largely each other's ground. **It is the last time.** The word 'time'—literally, *hour*—designates a season having defined limits. What is meant by the last such season here announced? It must be remembered that the assertion was made eighteen hundred years ago, and was as true then as it would be if spoken to-day. Is it not said of the entire period of the Christian Church? When Christ was ascended, he gave the Holy Spirit. From that beginning was the Dispensation of the Spirit, to be continued till the last of the elect should be brought in. When the Spirit came, Peter said this was what Joel said should come to pass in the last days. In prophetical passages of the Old Testament the expression "last days" is used almost exclusively of the Messianic times. (Gen. 49: 1; Isa. 2: 2; Micah 4: 1.) The expressions "latter times" in 1 Tim. 4: 1, "last days" in 2 Tim. 3: 1, Heb. 1: 2, "last times" in 1 Peter 1: 20, "last time" in Jude 18, "ends of the world" in 1 Cor. 10: 11, "end of the world" in Heb. 9: 26, appear from their context to designate the whole gospel period. It is the last stage of the world's religious history. There is to be no other season of salvation, no added forces of redemption in some after era. The theory of some that another more powerful Dispensation is yet to come for the men of the world is virtually denied. Now is the 'last time,'

heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.
19 They went out from us, but they were not of us;

that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the
19 last hour. They went out from us, but they were

the last hour. This is the last Dispensation. The great ingatherings of Gentiles or Jews are to take place in it, and not beyond it. **And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come.** They *heard* (aorist) it at the outset under apostolic teaching. *Comes*—not 'shall come'—is the present of ordained fixity, prophetic fixity. (Alford.) Is not the continuous appearance, or continually recurring appearance, of antichrist, or antichrists, characterizing the Christian period, suggested in this present tense? 'Antichrist' is a name used only in John's Epistles (ver. 22; 4: 3; 2 John 7), though the doctrine of antichrist is in other passages, such as 2 Thess. 2: 3–7; 1 Tim. 4: 1–3; 2 Peter 2: 1–3. The term, in its Greek composition, may mean exclusively an adversary of Christ, or it may mean one instead of Christ and by consequence against him. The prefix (ἀντί) signifies *over against;* and one can be over against the truth under the Christian name, or repudiating it; against it in name and act, or claiming to represent it and to stand for it, yet denying it. The connection in which John treats the subject shows clearly that his idea of antichrist is that of one who in some sense stands instead of Christ; taking the Christian name yet opposing that very kingdom of truth which the name implies. We think that Paul's and Peter's doctrine implies the same conception of antichrist. This antichrist may be, when fully developed (2 Thess. 2: 3), a collective body of spiritual opposition falsely claiming the Christian name, or the leader of such a body. But the apostles had taught that though this man of sin, claiming true religion, but yet destroying it, should be fully developed near the second coming of Christ, yet he would have his forerunners, his types, all the way through the Gospel Dispensation. After referring to this antichrist Paul declares, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work"; which quite accords with John's teaching, "Ye heard that antichrist comes; even now many antichrists have arisen." And this fact that antichrists had already appeared was proof that the last decisive Dispensation had come: **Whereby we know that it is the last time.** The era of these characters is the world's last era. The rise of such men in the gospel epoch is a part of prophecy and fact, and the churches must not be disappointed or shocked by it. Here, then, is our idea of what an antichrist is. It is a false teacher of the gospel; one who while professing to believe the gospel, so perverts it as to destroy it. It is the subtle teacher of falsehood in Christianity's name. The fiercest opposition is within the temple of God, and in the name of God. (2 Thess. 2: 4.) It is not the professed atheist, or infidel, who is an antichrist. Those mentioned by John were professors of Christ, and still held to him in their way. Their portrait is in Acts 20: 30, and in the dark colors of Jude. Labeling themselves with the Christian name; saying and doing, it may be, many Christian things,—they are the most dangerous foes of the truth. They catch the unwary and inexperienced, while they teach errors that go to subvert Christianity, and to ruin the souls of men. From the days of the apostles till now, the Gospel and the Church have had this covert opposition, and even now there are many antichrists. The apostles have forewarned us of it all. It is a part of the cost to count in entering into Christian relations. It is something inevitably incident to an advancing gospel. Let us not be dismayed. The struggle is not doubtful.

19. They went out from us. Said of the antichrists, the false teachers of Christian doctrine. So far as the philology is concerned, the going out (ἐξῆλθον) may mean the going forth of these persons upon their mission as professed Christian teachers (see 4: 1), or may mean their going out from the fellowship of the true Christian body, separating themselves. The latter meaning is the true one, as the whole tenor of the verse makes evident. Whether they went out because pressed out, or wholly of their own motion, does not appear. Though disagreeing with the main body of Christians, and separated, they still claimed to interpret the Christian doctrine, and evidently professed to be Christian teachers and, indeed, the true ones, else they

for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.
20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest [1] how that they all are not
20 of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy
21 One, [2] and ye know all things. I have not written

1 Or, *that not all are of us*.....2 Some very ancient authorities read *and ye all know*.

could have had no power of seduction over Christian minds (ver. 26); and the injunction to try the spirits (4: 1-3) would have been altogether needless. Persons who stood forth as direct opponents of Christianity, outside of the Christian pale, were already distinguished, and needed no testing; and such would scarcely come under the head of deceivers—for they played no false part, wore no mask. **But they were not of us.** And they never were. (Matt. 7: 23; John 6: 70; Acts 8: 21.) 'From us,' in the preceding sentence, and 'of us,' here, are the same (ἐξ ἡμῶν) in the Greek. But the former, with its verb of motion, has a local meaning; while the latter, with its verb of being, has a meaning of spiritual derivation, affinity, or relationship. These men had no vital sympathy with the Church of Christ. They had taken the Christian name, but had never had the Christian nature. **For if they had been of us,** etc. The words **no doubt,** do not belong in the sentence, and the statement is stronger without them. The statement is explicit, that if those men had been true Christians, they would have abode in Christian union and fellowship, they would have remained **with us** (μεθ' ἡμῶν) in doctrine and association. Their defection was proof that they did not belong with the true flock (Matt. 7: 15), and the doctrine is implied that truly regenerate men do not depart from the essential Christian faith, or the associate life of the Christian Church. They do not will to depart. They are kept. **But** [they did not remain with us] **that.** The telic 'that'—*in order that* (ἵνα), dependent on an obvious idea shaped by the last verb, expresses the purpose, not of the seceders, but of God who suffered their action to take place, and who makes the wrath of man to praise him. "A design which should be accomplished according to God's counsel." (Ebrard.) **They might be made manifest that they were not all of us.** [Better, *that they all were not of us.* The negative particle modifies the verb, instead of the word "all," and the sense is, that none of them were of us.—A. H.] This is the divine purpose. The language is difficult to handle. The apostle begins with the actual seceders as the subject of the verb 'manifested,' and goes on to declare in what light they are manifested, as not being of the true flock; but before he completes the declaration, he compounds with it the further idea that those generally who claim to be of this flock are not all of it; and the course of the seceders manifests the fact by tending to distinguish those who are genuine, and those who are not. "The construction is a mixed one, compounded of two—(1) that they may be manifested that not are they of us; (2) that it may be manifested that not are all of us," though they may profess to be. (Alford.) So Lücke, Düsterdieck, Huther, Lange, Ebrard. Compare the teachings of 1 Cor. 11: 19. There is then (1) the general fact, well for us to know, that there are the spurious among the true in the Church, (2) the fact that the spurious will prove and declare themselves sooner or later, (3) the fair implication that so proving themselves, their separation is to be desired. As false doctrines (ver. 22) was that which most of all separated these men, we find it does make a difference what a man believes; that though one profess to be a Christian, yet his doctrines may be such as to show that he cannot be a Christian. He may be amiable, gifted, apparently devoted, yet there are errors of doctrine which, if he believes them, show that he is not a child of God. In other words, the Christian standing of a man is to be tested by his doctrines, as well as his life. It does make a difference, or signify a difference, even with a man's heart, what he believes.

20. But (while all this is true of the false ones) **ye** (emphatic, in opposition to the false ones, the antichrists) **have an unction from the Holy One.** They pretend to be of the anointed (χριστοί), while ye have the anointing (χρῖσμα) indeed. 'Unction' is not the act of anointing, but the anointing oil, an emblem and name of the Holy Spirit, by whose bestowal

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.
22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and [1] because no lie is of the truth.
22 Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, *even* he that de-
23 nieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth

1 Or, *that.*

on believers they are made kings, prophets, and priests unto God, and are one in life with Father and Son. 'The Holy One,' from whom believers have this gift, is, in this place, Christ. (Luke 1: 35; Acts 3: 14.) Christ has the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3: 34), is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. (Heb. 1: 9), and this he gives to his true people. From him his members receive the unction. (Ps. 133: 2.) And there is a sense in which they receive it from the Father, inasmuch as Christ himself does. **And ye know all things.** The Holy Spirit which ye have enables you to do so. (John 14: 26; 16: 13.) [It may be fairly doubted whether the promise of Christ in John 16: 13 was meant for all Christians in the same sense, or to the same extent, as far as knowledge is concerned, as for the apostles. It included inspiration for the latter. See "Commentary on John." — A. H.] The knowing (οἴδατε) is the result of seeing with the spiritual eye opened by the Holy Spirit. The knowledge is qualitative, not quantitative; the knowing of nature, not extension. The knowledge is the same in kind with that which we have of Father and Son. (Luke 10: 22.) "The quality of an infinity we may know, even when we cannot know its quantity." (Joseph Cook.) The knowledge is the spiritual discerning of 1 Cor. 2: 14. It is the discriminative knowledge of John 7: 17. It recognizes the truth when it sees it, and distinguishes it from falsehood and error. It has an eye for it; knows it as the bee knows the honey. Of course, John is thinking mainly of the doctrines of religion as the object of this knowledge; and he teaches that a God-taught (1 Thess. 4: 9) mind cannot depart far into error. It will know the vital truths; and, knowing them, will adhere to them. If this is true of all the converted, it makes them one in the essential faith.

21. John again (see on ver. 12) assures his readers that it is not from distrust of them, but from hearty confidence, that he wrote (ἔγραψα) the plain things now before them; having *now* in mind particularly his admonition concerning the antichrists. It is because they know the truth (reflection or image of God's nature), and its utter antagonism to falsehood, that he can have courage and hope to write to them. He feels that they will understand and appreciate his words, and rightly use them for their good, contrasting, in this respect, with the unspiritual, unknowing errorists. By **truth** and **life** he describes the doctrinal positions of the anointed and the antichrists respectively, and their utter mutual exclusiveness in origin and matter.

22. The apostle proceeds to tell us what the 'lie,' the chief error, of the false teachers is. **Who is a** (literally, *the*) **liar?** The article *the* marks its substantive as one that has been already expressly or impliedly mentioned. "Implication in the word *lie*, ver. 21." (T. S. Green, "Gram. N. T.," p. 13.) Paraphrase: "I have spoken of a lie, I have said virtually that somebody has been lying; now, who is the liar?" Instead of asking, "What is the lie?" the writer passes vividly from the general abstract to the definite concrete and asks, "Who (implying *what*) is the liar?" We might also say that the implication of the word is in the term *antichrists* as far back as ver. 18. **But** (or, *except*, εἰ μή) depends on an implied negative answer to the question—**He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.** The negative (οὐκ) in the original text is explained by supposing the proposition to be the tenor, or form, of the denial. The denying is to this effect, or in these terms, that Jesus is not the Christ. For idiom, see Luke 20: 27; Gal. 5: 17; Heb. 12: 19. This position was held in two forms (1), that Jesus Christ was not literal man (4: 2), and the humanity being denied, the Messiahship was denied, since the former was necessary to the latter; (2) that Jesus and the Logos were only temporarily and, as it were, mechanically connected; and as the Logos and the Messiah were held to be essentially identical, so Jesus could not be the Christ, or Messiah. See history of the Gnostic Cerinthus. Jesus might be accepted in a sense; and so Christ, in a sense;

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*
24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that con-
24 fesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son,
25 and in the Father. And this is the promise which

but that Jesus was the Christ was denied. **He is antichrist.** Better, *This is the antichrist.* (Revised Version.) This one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is to be identified with the (already mentioned) antichrist. **That denieth the Father and the Son.** Appositional clause further defining the antichrist, equivalent to even he that denieth, etc. (Revised Version.) To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Son of God, since the Son is Jesus Christ. And to deny the Sonship is to deny God's natural relation to Christ as Father. Hence, Father and Son are both denied. God's great reason for having the name of Father is his relation to his Son. If that relation be denied, the Fatherhood in its deepest sense is denied. Besides, God the Father is manifested, and is understood, only through the Son. (Matt. 11: 27.) Strange that the deniers of Christ's true nature do not see that their error invades and mars the true nature of God himself. It is a generic, far-reaching lie, affecting the whole system of truth; and the words of John Newton will come for utterance:

> What think ye of Christ? is the test
> To try both your state and your scheme;
> You cannot be right in the rest,
> Unless you think rightly of him.

23. The same hath not the Father. Every one who denies the Son is evidently destitute of him, and of the Father also. To be without the Son is to be without the Father, for the Father is in the Son. (John 14: 9.) Not to have the Father means not to have union or communion with him or inheritance in him. (*But*) **he that acknowledgeth** (*confesseth*, as in the Revised Version, is the better rendering) **the Son, hath the Father also.** The translators of our Common Version doubted the genuineness of these words, hence their italics. Later criticism puts them into the true text. The *confessing* is the opposite of the denial; and it is open, express confession, such as Rom. 10: 9; Matt. 10: 32; Luke 12: 8 and John 12: 32 emphasize the necessity of. Nor is it such a confession in a mere intellectual way, but in a spiritual way, and from the centre of the soul. That confession secures the Son, and with him all the riches of the Father.

24–29. ABIDING IN THE TRUTH AND ABIDING IN THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW LIFE GO TOGETHER.

Having spoken of the position of the deceiving antichrists, and of the doctrinal disaster and utter spiritual impoverishment involved in it, John turns to his readers, sound in faith, and exhorts them in the spirit of loving confidence.

24. Let that therefore abide in you, etc. The Revised Version is more exact: *As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning.* The original sentence is not completed, as the opening words might lead one to expect. But it is so constructed as to make the pronoun emphatic: Ye, on your part, in contrast with the false teachers. **From the beginning** is explained at ver. 7. What they heard from that time is the apostolic doctrine, especially that denied by the antichrists. 'In you' is in the place of emphasis. What they heard with the outward ear, the apostle exhorts them to have, without change, in living union with their hearts. "Keep it," he says, "rooted fast in warm convictions, against all perversions of the antichrists." How often John recalls, and uses for himself, words from his well-remembered Saviour's lips! This word *abide*, with its deep adjunct 'in you' (compare John 15: 1–10), is an example. **If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.** The words 'remain' and 'continue' represent the same original verb as the word 'abide' in the first clause; and the Revised Version does well in giving it the same rendering in every instance. 'Ye also,' as well as the true doctrine. If the true doctrine of the Son and Father (note the order of persons, order of faith and experience) abides in you, ye in turn shall abide in them; the truth in you, you in the Son and

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.
26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.
27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man

26 he promised [1] us, *even* the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them that
27 would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and

1 Some ancient authorities read *you*.

Father; the truth in living union with you, you in living union with them. The truth abiding in us, and we abiding in the highest spiritual blessings; these go together. Divine union and fellowship are connected with a right doctrinal faith. It is dangerous to speculate one's self, in the slightest measure, away from the foundation of apostolic truth. A man wrests vital truth to his own desolation.

25. And this. Namely, the reality of abiding in the Son and Father; this union with them just spoken of. So Hackett. **Is the promise that he** (that is, Christ, who is the centre of thought in many verses back) **hath promised us.** When he was on earth. Union with Son and Father is the essence or principle of that which was promised—namely, the eternal life. **Even** (*the*) **eternal life** is in a sense appositional with 'the promise,' but in form (Greek) is attracted into the case of the intervening relative. In John 17: 3, the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ is substantially eternal life. But this knowledge *is union with its object.* "Oneness in will with God, and partaking of his nature, is itself eternal life." (Alford.) The eternal life is divine life, or spiritual life, the true life, or the life indeed (1 Tim. 6: 19, Greek text), something distinct from continuous natural existence which sinners, even devils, possess. One must carefully mark this distinction, that he be not entangled in the snare of materialism. Men who already possessed natural existence received the superadded gift of the life indeed. Eternal life is the life of the Spirit. One has this life the moment he believes. The interpretations given to eternal life by materialism and spiritual religion are irreconcilably different. The former makes it the mere carrying on of natural existence, so that notwithstanding death there is being afterwards; while the latter makes it another and new life, beginning the moment one believes, it may be long before death; something which does not make natural existence any more certain after death, but turns it into a blessing. Mere conscious existence, temporary or eternal, is not of itself necessarily a blessing. It may be a curse. The devils find it so. Lost men will find it so. Only the new life laid upon it can make it a blessing to one who has sinned. Christ did not die to purchase for us mere continuous conscious existence. He purchased for us a new life, able to turn conscious existence, otherwise a curse, into a blessing; an existence out of God, into a blissful one in God.

26. These things. That have preceded (see note on 1: 4) from ver. 18 onward, regarding the false teachers and their denial of the truth. **Have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.** 'Seduce you' from the truth. Doing it as an occupation. It is the act of deceiving and causing to wander. John puts the faithful on their guard, and fortifies them by impressing them with the enormity of the antichristian error, and its logical outcome. He implies that there are aspects to the teaching or acting of errorists that are seductive, calculated to deceive, were it possible, the very elect. It has such a part of truth, or is so agreeable to the natural heart, or is accompanied with such professions of sincerity, or such appearance of amiability, or invites to such associations, or so flatters the vanity of intellectualism or singularity, that it is *adapted* to deceive; and the warning must be emphatic.

27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you. The Revised Version is more literal: *And as for you*, etc. See note on ver. 24. It vividly contrasts the apostle's trusted readers with the doctrinal seducers, and introduces the favorite testimony of the spiritual standing that made them as a rock against all error. 'The anointing.' Anointing-oil; emblematic name of the Holy Spirit. There must be a reason why here and in ver. 20, this particular name is given to the Spirit when his work is regarded as the source of the spiritual knowledge of Christians. Is that reason suggested in Rev. 3: 18? 'Which ye have received.' When

teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.
28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when

ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, [1]and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, [2]ye
28 abide in him. And now, *my* little children, abide

1 Or, *so it is true, and is no lie; and even as, &c* .....2 Or, *abide ye.*

they were first consciously saved. This receiving is by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3: 2), and by obeying. (Acts 5: 32.) 'From him'—namely, Christ (2: 20), who has the Spirit to give to his people in fulfillment of one of his divine offices. The one ever present to the apostle's thought, the one about whom both error and faith chiefly revolved, the one running as a life-current in all the Epistle, needed only a pronoun by which to be recognized. 'Abideth in you.' It is no temporary gift. Once received, the Spirit abides in us, as do his graces. (1 Cor. 13: 13.) True, his *manifestations* in experience may be hid at times; but he himself remains an eternal possession. **And ye need not.** And so ye have no need. **That any man teach you.** There may be some peculiar meaning in the word 'that' (ἵνα), some sort of aim or purpose, as if a need of knowledge were *designed* to invite instruction; still it is simpler to take Winer's position, and regard the word 'that' here, with its verb, as used in place of the infinitive as found in Heb. 5: 12; Matt. 3: 14; 1 Thess. 1: 8, a usage beginning to appear in New Testament times, and now universally employed in the modern Greek. See John 2: 25; 16: 30; 18: 39. It is evident from Jer. 31: 33; John 6: 45; Heb. 8: 10; 1 John 2: 20, that there is a knowledge on the part of the regenerate—given by the Holy Spirit—which supersedes the necessity of external teachers. This knowledge relates to the nature of spiritual objects. It is qualitative and discriminative. The objects being presented, it knows the true through the Spirit. (1 Cor. 2: 11, 14.) The Spirit in us does not reveal new truth, but illumines, certifies, and leads into the old, and roots it in the convictions. And by this we are fortified against the novelties and errors of human wisdom. **But.** In contrast with '*need not.*' **As the same anointing.** The weight of criticism is altogether in favor of the words 'of him' (Revised Version "his") in place of 'the same': The anointing of him—that is, of Christ. And this rendering helps to carry the mind to Christ as the subject of the word 'hath taught' near the close of the verse, and the one meant by 'in him' at the very close. **Teacheth.** This work of the Spirit is continuous and ever present; while Christ taught (ἐδίδαξεν) once for all, and passed to heaven. If Christ teaches now, it is by the Spirit. **And is truth.** Or, better, *true.* Said of the Spirit. And if he be true, he is no lie (compare ver. 21), and his teaching is exclusive and binding—his teaching especially, that we should abide in Christ, for all that he is. **And even as it hath taught you.** The 'and' naturally introduces something additional to the Spirit's teaching; and the 'even as,' stronger than the simple "as" before given, naturally introduces something that backs up and makes more cogent the lesson coming from the Spirit's teaching. And what is so likely to be that something additional, and that something enforcing the Spirit's lesson, as a citing of Christ's own teaching of the same tenor and effect? Then the aorist tense of the word 'taught' (not, 'hath taught') points back to the definite historical act of some person, other than the Spirit, who is a constant working presence. And what so natural as to think here of the oral teaching of Christ, especially as he is brought into view at the opening of the sentence, and is surely referred to by the words **abide in him** at the close? And, to confirm all, there is the known record in John 15: 4, that he did teach his people this very duty, to abide in him. This teaching of Christ's own lips, we believe John recalls, to enforce the Spirit's teaching, as against the seduction of the antichrists. Our rendering of this difficult passage then is: *But as the anointing of him teaches you concerning all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as he* (Christ himself) *taught you, abide* (μένετε, not the future μενεῖτε) *in him.*

28. And now denotes simple transition to a new phase of the matter of abiding in Christ. John had just urged it from the consideration that it was the Spirit's and the Lord's teaching. He now urges it from the consideration of the Lord's second coming. **Little children.** Humble, beloved, born of

he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.
29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed [1] before him at his [2] coming. If ye know that he is righteous, [3] ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him.

1 Gr. *from him*.....2 Gr. *presence*.....3 Or, *know ye*.

God. The very name an enforcement of spiritual obligations, and inspiring loving obedience. **Abide in him.** In Christ. Repeated from the close of the preceding verse, partly from the importance of the injunction, partly that the apostle may lay it upon the hearts of his dear ones as his own independent charge, but most of all for the sake of enforcing it with the new consideration of the approaching second advent. The certainty of our salvation is consistent with watchful caution and effort lest we be lost. None of the men in the ship (Acts 27: 22-24) shall be lost. Nevertheless, "except these (men) abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." (27: 31.) God works the sure result through our free acting. Means as well as ends are of God's purpose. There is something wrong about an assurance that is careless. The one actually safe in Christ will try carefully to abide in him. **That when he** (Christ) **shall appear** (better, *if he be manifested*, at any time, as he will be some time), **we may have confidence** (or, *boldness*). The boldness is that childlike freedom, that perfect sense of justification, that up-looking spiritual assurance, which they have who are consciously in Christ, and which they will have under the greatest revelation, even that of the Lord coming in the air. (1 Thess. 4: 17.) **And not be ashamed** (shrink with shame) **before** (literally, *from*) **him**—that is, from Christ, the Judge. The expression 'from (ἀπὸ) him' implies a motion of the body; it may be an averting or hanging of the face, caused by the sense of shame belonging to conscious guilt. This feeling is the opposite of that boldness in the day of judgment (4: 17), cheering those united to Christ. **At his coming.** In his 'coming' or *presence* (παρουσία), when manifested at the last day. The important word occurs but once in all John's writings, though several times elsewhere in the New Testament.

29. If ye know (as a fact) **that he is righteous.** The previous context, which has suggested the idea of righteousness here, demands that the word 'he' should relate to Christ. It is the natural subject; and it brings us back to the very character of Christ with which the chapter opened: 'Jesus Christ (who is) righteous.' See note on 2: 1. This character of Christ is suggested by the boldness or shame felt by those who meet him at his second coming. These feelings imply the righteous attribute in him. Besides, righteousness is always thought of as a kind of omnipresence at the second advent. Ver. 28 suggests the opening declaration of ver. 29. Of course, if 'he' refers to Christ, 'of him' at the close most naturally has the same reference. And why may not the believer be said to be born or begotten of Christ? Strictly, it is the Holy Spirit who is the agent in regeneration, and it is Christ who works in the work of the Spirit as much and as truly as it is the Father. [In 1 Cor. 4: 15 Paul says: "For in Christ Jesus"—that is, in the power of Christ Jesus exercised doubtless by the Holy Spirit—"I begat you through the gospel"—a passage confirming the view of the author.—A. H.] **Ye know** (experimentally) **that every one that doeth righteousness is born** (or *begotten*) **of him.** The doing of righteousness, as a tree bears fruit and as a continuous activity, is intimately connected with abiding in Christ. It is doing as Christ the righteous one does. It is acting out the same nature and life. It is the proof of kinship, of the new birth. And they who have this relationship with Christ will find their family likeness to him perfected as they meet him at the final day (3: 2), and will not be ashamed. It is 3: 2 that completes the thought of this verse, and brings it up into relation with the searching *parousia* noticed in the preceding verse. Spiritual kinship in the new birth guarantees moral and spiritual likeness, and such likenesss will produce the home feeling before the manifested Christ.

CHAPTER III.

BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons

1 Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children

Ch. 3: 1–3. The Child of Grace, Cherishing a Hope of Glory, Purifies Himself.

The Christ-nature as a nature of righteousness, taught in 2: 29, suggests much of the thought of this new chaper. "Verse 29 is the conclusion of the preceding part: but it is in such a manner, that it is the organic germ out of which the following part is developed." (Ebrard.) Again and again, by the tender epithet of "little children," John has reminded his faithful readers of their new-birth relation to God. But in 2: 29 he has brought this position of Christians into more distinct view, and this it is—this sonship, or rather divine *childship* of the believer—which calls forth the admiring exclamation, with which the present section opens.

1. Behold. See, all of you. Let it fill, for the moment, all your thought. Let it stand out before the mind as a lofty object before the natural eyes. **What manner of love.** What peculiar kind of love, and how great love. The quality and the degree of the divine grace in the case are both marked. As to its kind, there was nothing like it among men. As to its degree, it was without measure and beyond expression. Such is that love that lies behind all the power and privilege of salvation. (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8; Titus 3: 4; 1 John 4: 10.) The tree of life in any soul is rooted in the love of God. The river of life has its fountain in the bosom of God.[1] **The Father hath bestowed upon us**—literally, *given to us.* The name is suggested by the particular grace relating to sonship, and uttered with a personal sense of the filial relation. By the giving of love (James 4: 6) is meant the bestowal of it in its expression and effect. Doubtless this gift of love connects itself in the writer's mind with the gift of Christ. **That we should be called the sons of God.** Better, *children of God;* since the term points not only to relation, privilege, or honor, but to a nature received by the divine begetting. Every true Christian is one whom God has begotten; he has been made a partaker of the divine nature; hence his spiritual childhood. The word 'that' (ἵνα, *in order that*) brings forward the purpose, or designed effect, of the wonderful love bestowed. 'Should be called,' by whom? By God himself, and by all intelligent beings in heaven or earth, who sympathize in God's judgment. It is by the Father primarily that one is named his child. It is a divine title. It implies divine recognition, and adoption. To be called thus a child of God is the public acknowledgment of the relation instituted in regeneration. Nor will God at any time disown the relation. To confess it is of his love and delight. As an earthly child better realizes and rejoices in it when an honored parent fondly recognizes him as his child, so the Christian better realizes and prizes his divine child-relation when assured that the Father owns it. John counts it a great thing that such as we should receive this divine name. Here is an humble sense of his own, and his brethren's, ill deservings, which enhances the wonder of their recognition by God himself as his children. The saved sinner feels the unworthiest of all. (1 Tim. 1: 15.) Divine love touching a sinner and lifting him to an acknowledged place in the divine family! Evidently our apostle views the title, 'children of God,' as peculiar and distinctive, and belonging to only a portion of mankind. A certain class of religionists speak of all as the children of God. There is a remote sense in which all are children of God—that is, in virtue of creation. But this is rarely alluded to in the Bible. The true sonship is by the new birth, and spiritual kinship with Christ. We are children of God in virtue of regeneration, and union with Christ—union with him so as to stand in his relation, and receive his very name. The fatherhood of God is to be defined

[1 Huther remarks that "ποταπός (a later form of ποδαπός, properly=whence), never used in the New Testament for a direct question, is not strictly=*quantus*, but=*qualis* (compare Luke 1: 29; 2 Peter 3: 11), but is often used as an expression of wonder at something specially glorious (compare Matt. 8: 27; Mark 13: 1; Luke 7: 39), so that the meaning of *qualis* plays over into that of *quantus*. So here."—A. H.]

of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

of God: and *such* we are. For this cause the world
2 knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if [1] he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we
3 shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath

1 Or, *it*.

in this relation. God is pre-eminently the Father of Christ, and of those in him. "And (*such*) we are." (Rev. Ver.) This clause, inserted by the best text, asserts the reality of the childship, justifying the name, and meeting a possible cavil. **Therefore the world knoweth us not.** On this account. Since we are children of God by a new nature, raised into a new sphere of life, endowed with the principles and attributes of a new race, clothed with traits and privileges appropriate to this higher relation—for this cause the world does not know us. The world has some general judgment of the Christian by his outward fruits. But the new life within, the new spiritual nature, which makes one a child of God, the world does not know. It has never experienced it. It is a spiritual thing, and must be spiritually discerned. The world has no way of discerning between a natural amiability and a grace of the Spirit. **Because it knew him not**—namely, Christ, when he was on earth. The person and the fact were too well known to require the name to be given. The inability of the world to discern the Christian's nature was manifest in men's treatment of Christ himself. (John 1: 5, 10; 16: 3; 1 Cor. 2: 8.) The world could not see that in Christ which did most to make him what he was, and so rejected him. And if we have received any part of Christ's nature, we need not expect any better appreciation. A people to a great extent not understood must we be. We should count the cost, in making friends with Christ. (4: 17; Matt. 10: 25; John 15: 19.)

2. Beloved. Not appreciated by the world, yet known and appreciated. The epithet means (1) loved by God and fellow-Christians, (2) possessed by the love-grace, (3) impliedly, lovable. **Now.** Temporal, not logical. Emphatic, in contrast with the 'not yet' which follows. Though esteemed as earthen pitchers (Lam. 4: 2), yet are believers even now the precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold. Though earthly eyes see it not, they are already children of God, allied to him in a new nature. **And it doth not yet appear** (*it is not yet made manifest*) **what we shall be.** What we shall be is no uncertainty, but it is not yet manifested. Our being already God's children is the guaranty of the fullest perfection, which some time will be manifested to all beings. What God sees inwardly shall as plainly be seen outwardly. The light within must shine out, as Christ was transfigured. What the divine childship involves must be evolved; the latent must become patent. **We know.** As a fact (οἴδαμεν). How much John says about *knowing!* In the presence of Christian revelation and experience, we do not conjecture: we know. The connective **but** (δὲ) is erased in the critical text, and the new sentence begins with perfect independence. **That when he shall appear** (or, *if he shall be manifested*). The subject seems to be, on the whole, Christ, and not the 'what we shall be' of the preceding sentence. That our verb should have a personal subject best accords with the mention of 'him' in the next clause; and that this personal subject is Christ is shown in 2: 28. Compare Col. 3: 4; Phil. 3: 20, 21. The manifestation of Christ and all his people is to be at his second coming, in the end of the world. **We shall be like him**—namely, Christ, who is our pattern. The likeness (see Rom. 8: 29) will be in the unfolded spiritual nature and in the resurrection body—in other words, in the manifested glory of the risen and perfect human nature. Until that event, our life is hid with Christ. (Col. 3: 3.) Even through the state between death and the resurrection, though we shall be with the Lord, we shall not have reached the state of glorious manifestation, and that likeness to Christ which our passage anticipates. **For** or, *because* **we shall see him as he is.** (Gen. 22: 14.) The one referred to is plainly Christ; but the relation of the sentence to the preceding context is difficult to decide. It certainly states the reason (ὅτι) for something. Is it (1) the reason for the likeness? Is the final vision of the glorified Jesus instrumental in bringing about the likeness to

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.
4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is
4 pure. Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness:
5 and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that he was

him, according to the principle involved in 2 Cor. 3: 18? Does John state this in our present sentence? Or (2) is it the statement of an evidential reason? In other words, the reason why in the last day we shall know that we are like Christ, or why now we may have confidence that the full likeness shall be? It is certain that we are to see him just as he is; that is proof that we shall have already become like him, since a perfect likeness is necessary to a perfect vision. Or (3) is our sentence a statement confirming the fact supposed in the words 'if he should be manifested'? In other words, does it relate to the protasis rather than the apodasis of the preceding sentence? And that he will be manifested is certain, because we are surely to see him, even just as he is, and that involves his literal manifestation. Either of these three explanations is plausible, and easily understood. Probably, in the present instance, we most serve the reader by clearly stating them, without making an absolute decision for one of them. We know that (1) is the more common interpretation, but the thought is rather forced and refined, the philosophy a little remote. Besides, it implies an order in the transformation at and following the resurrection not otherwise to be thought of. For it implies that the elect will be raised up in some unnamed moral and physical form, then get a vision of Christ, and then, upon that, be further transformed into his full likeness. It is also more probable that the likeness should precede the seeing and appreciating of Christ, and be necessary to it (Ps. 17: 15), as (2) implies. As for (3), it is new, but is at least worth considering.

3. And every man that hath this hope in (literally, *upon* ἐπί) **him.** That is, upon Christ, the ground on which the hope rests; the hope, namely, of resurrection glory and likeness to Christ. **Purifieth himself.** Here in this world, and as an on-going thing. The confidence of the glorious end, modeled to us in Christ, will lead those who feel it now to imitate him. We tend to become like that which we hope for. **Even as he** (ἐκεῖνος) **is pure.** The demonstrative 'he,' *that one*, refers back to the pronoun 'him' (αὐτῷ), and hence to Christ. The model of the purity is complete.

4–9. Righteousness, and not Sin, is the Grand Characteristic of the Regenerate.

Sin is incompatible with birth from God. John had just stated that he who hopes for Christ-likeness at the resurrection will now seek to copy him in holy living. This leads him to present the true moral ideal of the Christian, which he does in explicit language, with the aid of those spherical and mutually exclusive conceptions so common to this writer. He implies that this ideal is a constant argument against sinning, a prevailing motive to personal holiness.

4. Whosoever committeth sin. In contrast with the one seeking purity. It is the doer of sin. That is his nature and character, as the evil tree bearing evil fruit. He lives in the sphere of sin. **Transgresseth also the law**—literally, *doeth lawlessness*, that which is a deviation from law (ἀνομία). The sinning may be of any sort, small or great, of the heart or of the life; it is not merely something bad in itself; it is also in every instance a transgressing of God's law, a violation of his personal will, an affront to God himself. A man may plead that he is only a little sinner; that though he fails towards God he does his duty by his fellows, and so lull his conscience. But John will not let a man rest there. He declares that the doer of any sin is a transgressor of law, a criminal in the eyes of God. We are under the divine government, and it is one of omnipresent law; and the sinner, of whatsoever sort or dimensions, is a rebel against it. Both the offense and the rightful condemnation are thus exposed. **For sin is the transgression of the law.** The violation of the will of God. (Ps. 51: 4.) What better definition of sin? Both subject and predicate in the Greek have the article. "Each term being thus an abstract or universal, the resulting statement is that sin and breach of the law are identical to the full extent of each." (T. S. Green, "New Testament Gram.," p. 36.) [Would it not then

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.
6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever

manifested to [1]take away sins; and in him is no sin.

1 Or, *bear sins.*

be better to omit the article before "transgression" as well as before "sin" in translating, thus: *Sin is transgression of law?*—A. H.] All sin is law-breaking. The Christian by subtle sophistry may think a sin is not for him as criminal as it would be for another. Our apostle rebukes and corrects this by declaring all sin to be against the will and nature of God. Another might imbibe the antinomian idea that, having been saved by Christ, he is out of the pale of law, and cannot be controlled or judged by it. John dissipates this fancy. He says that any defect or deflection from the right is transgression of law in the saved man as well as in others. The law searches and tries every man. It is the measure of character. And this transgression of law is the transgression of the whole law considered as a unity (James 2:10), as it is the violation of the one will of God, and touches the one God. Christ was God's law embodied. In him we can see that the law is holy, just, and good; is spiritual, reaching the thoughts and feelings of the heart; applies not merely to outward matters, but to all the inward moral life. Hence, every failure to reach the pure spirit of Christ may be known as the transgression of law.

5. And ye know (the fact, hence οἴδατε) **that he** (*that one*, Christ) **was manifested** (*in the flesh*) **to take away our sins.** The 'our' of the Common Version is not in the now accepted text. The very statement that Christ was 'manifested' implies his pre-existence. (John 8:58.) But why did he come in the flesh? It was 'to take away our' ('our' is not in the Greek) 'sins'—to *lift up and bear away* (ἄρῃ) the sins of men (Matt. 1:21; John 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24) by his sacrifice as the Lamb of God. [See a careful article in the Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 32, p. 475 seq., on "The New Testament View of Christ as Bearing Sin," by Rev. W. H. Cobb.—A. H.] All 'sins' (plural) need atonement, and this confirms what had been just said of their criminality; and that there is atonement inspires hope in the midst of the dark array of sins which the apostle has made. The deep conviction properly awakened by ver. 4 is followed by the great salvation of ver. 5. Sin, sin, then, was the dreadful occasion of Christ's coming in the flesh. Our sins called him here. These tried and oppressed his soul. These nailed him to the cross. These led him to provide for pardon and moral purification by the suffering of death. It would seem from the general context that John's phrase, 'to take away sins' has a double meaning—namely, pardon and purifying. Christ's death for sinners provided both. Thereby the penalty of sin was borne, and we, repenting, are freed from guilt; thereby the Holy Spirit is procured, and we, appropriating that agent, are purified. And the whole work is one. For we are pardoned, not that we may go on sinning, but that we may more surely have a holy character. The manifested Christ is the source, not only of pardon, but of moral purification; and the latter because of the former. It is all embraced in the idea of taking away sins. (1 Peter 2:24.) Sanctification follows justification as fruit follows blossom. Moral fruit comes out of the legal transaction. A religion that does not purify does not pardon. Christ's advent looked to the nature of sin as well as the guilt of sin. The object of Christ's manifestation in the flesh being thus comprehensive, John wishes to know if it is being accomplished in his brethren. If they are not aiming at the same thing that Christ came for, how are they in sympathy with him? How can they claim salvation while indifferent about its moral effects? If Christ thought enough of sins to come from heaven and die on account of them, shall we think lightly of them? can we lightly live in them? The passage terribly arouses the slumbering conscience of the careless religious professor. **And in him is no sin.** The complete moral purity of Christ is here recalled for several reasons: 1. To show that he was prepared in character to be a sin-bearer for others; 2. To suggest that he would specially desire the purity of his people; 3. To give them a strong motive to this in his own example and position with regard to sin; 4. To prepare the way for the doctrine of the next verse.

6 Christ came to get sin out of the way;

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.
7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.
8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither [1]knoweth him.
7 *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is
8 righteous: he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the

1 Or, *hath known.*

not only so, he stood apart from sin in his own character. And this last assertion prepares for the words that follow. **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.** The abiding in Christ is the state of vital union with him. If in him there is no sin, then those absolutely united to him and identified with him must partake of his sinless character, and be like him in that respect. What! do they not sin at all? Is the Christian a sinless being? If John's reasoning means the sinlessness of any Christians, it means the sinlessness of all who in their conversion have entered into union with Christ, and their sinlessness during all the period of salvation. But this contradicts 1: 8 and that progressive work of purification which the Christian in 3: 3 is said to carry on. It contradicts our conscious life. Now, what is the interpretation of John's language? We answer by saying that in this and similar cases he states an ideal or principle. He presents what the divine union involves in its fullness, that which will be when our union with Christ shall be developed in experience and actual life to its normal and perfected state. Abiding in Christ in its fulfilled degree will involve a partaking in full of the holiness of Christ. This ideal had not yet been fully reached by John and his brethren, though the union had richly commenced and was going on. But he looks forward to their perfected union with the Lord, and predicates of it complete purity; nay, he even speaks of it as if it were present, since the beginning in all grace involves the ending, the germ the full unfolding; as the New Testament calls every Christian a saint, not because he has reached that ideal, but with reference to the perfection which is yet to be. John gives us the *law*, or *principle*, of union with Christ. Purity characterizes this union; and so far as the union is realized and fulfilled, so far there will be purity, until the ideal becomes fully real, and then, by the very law of the union, there will be utter sinlessness. The union is a holy principle, and the more it is developed the more it bears personal holiness with it. The Christian, therefore, by the very law of his union with Christ, is one who is reaching on to moral purity; and if not approaching the ideal, he may doubt his spiritual state. Purity is the law, the tendency, of divine union. **Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him** (Christ), **neither known him.** Has not had either a *vision* of him, or an *experience* of him; is now in a state of spiritual blindness and ignorance. "The Greek perfect denotes an abiding present effect resting on an event in the past. In the Greek perfect the *present* predominates." (Alford.) John states antithetically a truth implied in the former part of the verse—a truth that comes out from the mutual exclusiveness of the sin character and the Christ character. John states here the law, or tendency, of the sin character. He who sins as his law, the on-going, developing law of his life, knows nothing of the saving vision or purifying knowledge of Christ. Sin is blinding. Sin is the foe of divine fellowship. If this be the total effect in the unregenerate, is it not to the Christian dust in his spiritual sight and a palsy in his spiritual love?

7. Little children. An appeal of affection and a reminder of the spiritual standing of those addressed. **Let no man deceive you.** Lead you astray, or cause you to wander. If little children, they need caution against the wiles of false teachers, as sheep need guarding against devouring beasts. False teachers, antichrists, had already appeared, and it would seem that some of them were teaching that one might be a Christian, and so belong to the class of the righteous, yet go on sinning as before, without condemnation. "Be not deceived," says the apostle, "with such teaching. Know that if one is a Christian he is of the class of the righteous, and his doing, the fruit of his life, will agree with this fact. He will reflect Christ, who, righteous himself, was for that reason a doer of righteousness. The being proves itself in the doing. The good tree brings forth good fruit."

8. He that committeth (or *doeth*) **sin.** Defined as in the note on ver. 4. The sin

devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might de-
9 stroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten
10 of God. In this the children of God are manifest,

doer is here contrasted with the righteous doer of the preceding verse, as to his ideal likeness and relationship. **Is of the devil.** Who, with this verse and ver. 10 in mind, can doubt the personality of the devil? And why doubt it any more than that of an angel? What is gained, in any interest of reason or religion, by doubting it? The devil is the ideal, the fully developed, sinner. The sinning man finds the goal to which he is tending, the type to which he is approximating, the same moral nature of which he has partaken, in the devil. There is his kinship. To be of the devil is to have his moral likeness, and the same law of sin. In this sense the sinner on earth is a child, and the devil a father. (John 8:44; Acts 13:10.) **From the beginning.** Of human history, when there was man to slay morally. (John 8:44.) **For this purpose** (or *to this end*). The purpose is stated in the last part of the sentence. **The Son of God was manifested.** In his total earthly career, including his death. (Heb. 2:14.) 'The Son of God,' begotten through the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:35.) A historical, not a metaphysical name. **That he might destroy the works of the devil.** "Those works which he incites men to perform" (Hackett)—namely, sins. These Christ destroys (λύσῃ), dissolves by his death (Heb. 9:26) and his Spirit (Rom. 8:13), and by weakening Satan himself. (Gen. 3:15.) Christ is the opposite of the devil in character and works. Whom will the believer take sides with? Will he make that his law which Christ came to destroy?

9. Whosoever (that is, *every one*) **is born of** (ἐκ) **God.** And (perfect participle) now possesses the new-birth nature. [It might be translated, "Every one who has been born of God."—A. H.] **Doth not commit** (or *do*) **sin.** Does not do it (present and continuous tense) as the law of his life, as the ideal tendency of his being; does not belong to the sin sphere. He belongs rather to the sphere of light, having God's nature through the new birth. The states of being begotten of God, and of sin, are viewed as mutually exclusive. This is the normal, ideal fact. "And John sets up the ideal as the true reality." (Godet.) See explanation of ver. 6. **For** (or *because*) **his** (God's) **seed abideth in him**—that is, in the one born of God. The seed (sperm) is the word of God quickened in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and so made the principle of regeneration. (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; John 5:38.) It is holy as God is holy; and as seed it germinates and expands, filling the being, making real the holy ideal. [It is by no means certain that the expression 'his seed' (σπέρμα αὐτοῦ) means "the word of God." Many interpreters think it means the Spirit of God; others think it is the new disposition generated by the Spirit. This new disposition, implanted by the gracious influence of the Spirit, is however called into action by the light of divine truth, and appears to the eye of consciousness as faith, love, hope, etc. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." (Matt. 13:38.) The figure is not precisely the same in this parable as in the verse before us; but it favors the view that the word 'seed' has reference to the vital principle, or holy disposition imparted to the soul, rather than to Christian truth—a more objective reality. How can truth be vitalized, made to germinate?—A. H.] **And he cannot sin.** To sin, in the sense explained at the opening of the verse. **Because he is** (literally, *has been*) **born of God.** And it is as impossible (οὐ δύναται) for him to sin, in the sense explained, as it is for the nature of God to sin. And as the nature of God in us abides and grows, as the child becomes the man, the old sin nature is sloughed off, and absolute holiness is reached. The divine germ and potency are the law, and what is law must be fulfilled.

10-18. THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH DISTINGUISHES THE CHILDREN OF GOD FROM THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL INCLUDES, IN PARTICULAR, LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, WHICH LOVE MUST BE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL.

We are impressed with the explicit, direct, and positive nature of the apostle's statements

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.
11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

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under this section. There is no such thing here as a halting or timid utterance; no disposition to cover the edge of truth, in order to spare the feelings of any who cannot stand the gospel tests. Our heading of the present section has sufficiently indicated its outgrowth from the preceding section.

10. In this. In this evidencing fact. **The children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.** 'Are manifest' to all who will look into the matter, and reflect upon it. One might say to John, "You have divided the world into these two classes, the one bearing in their soul the image of God, the other the image of the devil. They are mixed up together; how shall they be distinguished? By what test are they 'manifest'?" By this criterion, says John, which follows: **Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.** A very plain, short rule. Doing righteousness is doing that which likens us to Christ. See 2: 29 and note. The child of God will do this righteousness naturally. To further define this righteousness John mentions brotherly love as a part of it and co-ordinates it with it. An important part of practical righteousness is this love, which is so essential that he who lacks it cannot be a Christian. (John 13: 35.) It is that which shows what the hidden child-nature is. It is pre-eminently the revealing grace. Our verse, then, tends to unfold what practical righteousness is, and fairly introduces us to the subject of brotherly love, as marking the new nature.

11. For introduces proof of the position that the righteousness of brotherly love must distinguish God's children. It was one of the first things taught by the gospel, that Christ's people should love one another, that the family of God should have the family grace. It is therefore that manifestation which we expect to find distinguishing the children of God from the children of the devil. For explanation of **beginning,** see on 2: 7, and of **love one another,** see on 2: 8. This love is not love to all men, but is that which springs out of our relationship as children of one Father, and such as Christ had for his own (John 13: 34); it is involved in the kinship of nature. **That** (ἵνα). "Purpose and purport." (Alford.) "Declarative." (Hackett.)

12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. The words, *and so be*, supplied at the beginning of the sentence, would complete the sense, and connect it with the last words of ver. 11: "should love one another and so be not like wicked Cain." But the brief form in the text is in the interest of vividness and force. Compare John 6: 58, for construction. The example of Cain strikingly illustrates the love-precept by way of contrast. He wickedly violated the brotherly relation. Instead of loving his brother, he hated and slew him, acting out the nature of Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning. His deed showed what his nature was, with whom allied. Instead of making a sacrifice of love for his own brother, Cain took that brother and sacrificed him to his god, the devil. If Christians will not love another, they violate their assumed brotherly relation, and repeat the spirit of Cain and the devil. What a tell-tale mirror for an unloving Christian to look into. [The Revised Version translates: *not as Cain was of the evil one*, etc. The sense would then be, "that we should love one another, not being (of the evil one) as Cain was of the evil one, etc.—A. H.] **And wherefore** (χάριν τίνος). On account of what. **Because his own works were evil.** (Omit the word 'own,' for which there is nothing in the original.) Morally evil, hence wicked; bearing the nature of the wicked one. What is meant by the 'works' (ἔργα) of the two brothers? The term is *plural* as related to each of them, and therefore suggests something more than the one work of each just preceding the murder. The customary deeds, the manner of life, the opposite moral characters, of the two men, are meant. The act of

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.
14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.
15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

13 Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you.
14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth
15 not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath
16 eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we

murder on Cain's part was no accident of his moral life. It had a reason in the natural character, the habitual deeds, of the heart. It was the fruit of an evil tree. Moreover, it was the outcome of a heart in contrariety to a righteous heart such as Abel's was. The evil nature is in antipathy to the righteous nature. It does not love it, is averse to it, envies it, hates it, even as Satan's nature antagonizes God's nature. The carnal mind is enmity against God and whoever is like God. This is John's deep philosophy of the murder.

13. Marvel not. A negative command in the present looks to the discontinuance of an act. In John's conception, his readers had begun to wonder. **My brethren.** Omit the 'my' of the Common Version. The love-relation of those addressed is recognized, and their distinction from those who hate. **If the world hate** (*hateth*, Revised Version) **you.** 'If' with the indicative shows that the hypothesis is a reality. The world does hate you. Do not marvel. For you see, as in the case of Cain and Abel, that the world-nature and the Christian nature are contrary. This explains it. "Because ye are not of the world, . . . therefore the world hateth you." (John 15: 19.) The very principle of the new nature which binds Christians to each other is an occasion of repulsion to the world. In referring his readers to the hatred they have from the world, he affords them, 1. A further example of the principle of opposition between the seed of God and the seed of the devil; 2. A motive for them to love each other the more. Hatred, want of sympathy, from the world, should draw them to each other the more closely, as the cold blast of winter makes the children of the family press to each other's warmth.

14. We. Emphatic, as set over against the world. **Know.** As a fact (οἴδαμεν). **That we have passed.** And are still in the state thus reached. **From death unto** (that is, *out of death into*) **life.** This life is the new life, the life of the Spirit, the eternal life, the divine life. The death is the state opposite; not of non-existence, for they existed while unregenerate; but of separation from the true life; in the darkness outside of God's nature of light. What a change, then, is that from death to life! **Because we love the brethren.** Members of the spiritual family. The love is the new life in action, and the sure proof that the life is present. (Ver. 10, 11.) After the severe testing of the preceding verses, the assurance of these words would be most comforting. And how many self-distrusting souls of trembling faith in all the gospel times have by them been helped to the assuring evidence of their regeneration. They find in their hearts that they feel a drawing to Christians, which they do not feel towards the society of the world, a delightful love for them, though poor, or marred, or imperfect, a peculiar pleasure in being where they congregate, relishing their exercises and enjoying their fellowship, and this tells them, and manifests to all (John 13: 35), that in them is that new nature which allies them with God and all his people. **He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.** 'His brother' does not belong to the approved text. The absence of spiritual love from the character, which of course includes love of the brethren, is the sure sign of still abiding in death, where all men are by nature. The unloving heart has never passed over from the death state. If a child of God is no more to us than anybody else; if the society of the Church is no more to us than the society of the world; if God's love does not work consciously in us and have its willing response—we are simply not converted.

15. Whosoever hateth his brother. Hatred soon comes of not loving; it is of the same root and kind, only in a more positive form. The negative state is by no means a neutral state. The heart that does not love has the seeds of positive hatred, which will start up when occasion comes. This hatred, however hidden, is essential murder, man-killing (ἀνθρωποκτόνος). It is that germ whence

16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.
17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?
18 My little children, let us not love in word neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

love, because he laid down his life for us: and we
17 ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?
18 *My* little children, let us not love in word, neither
19 with the tongue; but in deed and truth. Hereby

all murder comes. He who looks on the heart sees there embryonic and responsible murder. The private malice, the secret grudge, the throbbing vengeance, the envy cherished in the heart, is murderous in its tendency. It is that from which Cain's murder sprang. The principal part of sin is in the heart. (Matt. 15: 19.) The present participle "hating" (translated 'hateth') probably suggests a hate which is a principle, something kept up and cherished. A good Christian may fall into the temptation temporarily, and still have the principle of eternal life abiding in him. But he will not cherish the evil feeling. He will cast it away, as a man will kick off the snare that has begun to entangle his feet. He will cry, 'O Lord, pardon my murder.' And God will pardon and save.

16. Hereby (or, *in this*)—namely, that Christ laid down his life for us. **Perceive** (or, *know*) **we the love.** (The sense is best given by omitting the article before love, as in the Revised Version.) 'Know' it sympathetically, spiritually, as something that has touched us, and affected us. Know what it is (4: 10), how great it is, how much it will move us to sacrifice for its dear object. **Because he** (ἐκεῖνος, *that one*, ever present to the thought of the apostle) **laid down his life.** For the usage, in case of this peculiar expression, see John 10: 11, 15, 17, 18. It means a voluntary self-sacrifice. It expresses not only the extent of the sacrifice, but the absolute voluntariness of it. Laying down one's life is the same as giving one's self. (Gal. 2: 20; Eph. 5: 2.) And in Christ's case it is the action of the very highest love. (Eph. 5: 2, 25.) **For us.** In our behalf; for our good. And for us while we were yet sinners. (Rom. 5: 8.) **And we** (emphatic, we the followers of Christ) **ought.** Are under obligation to him who has planted divine love in us, and has appointed the relation between love and sacrifice for its object, and has exemplified it to us in him whom we follow. **To lay down our lives for the brethren.** If needful; if their true good shall require it. This is love in practical action. It is love's proof. (John 15: 13.) We must love each other, therefore, not only at convenience, but at cost, even to the giving of ourselves. Love is the giving of self.

17. But. Contrast the above law of love with a certain example. **Whoso hath** (a supposed case) **this** (literally, *the*) **world's good** (or, *goods*), **and seeth** (or, *beholdeth*) **his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him** (not giving his pity, or his goods, much less his life, as required in ver. 16), **how dwelleth the love of God in him?** How is the true abiding element or principle of love in him? "It is put as a wondering question which challenges in vain a satisfactory answer." (Hackett.) It is an argument, a question, from the greater to the less. If, not laying down his life for the good of his brother, he cannot even pity him or give him alms, how much Christly love can there be in him?

18. My little children. Omit 'my.' See explanation at 2: 1, 12, 13, 18, 28. **Let us not love in word, neither in tongue.** Better, *with the tongue.* The last term has the article in the best text. Word and the tongue are mere instruments of profession. Do not love by these only; by profession only. The love of the professed brother described in the preceding verse was only profession and talk. Let not yours be so. **But** (on the contrary, let it be) **in deed and in truth.** (1 Peter 1: 22, 23.) In the element of these. In actual doing, and in the way of God's truth in the case. How fittingly, how forcibly, this exhortation closes the searching discussion of the section! How much in the manner and spirit of the aged John, as we think of him! The love-exhortation was his most ready word, and his ministry uttered it most affectionately to the very end. Godet, "Com. on John," Vol. I., p. 61. Nor has the sound of that appeal yet died away, or its influence on renewed hearts.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.
20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall
20 [1]assure our heart [2]before him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and
21 knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart con-

1 Gr. *persuade*.....2 Or, *before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God, &c.*

19–24. THE EXERCISE OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS ATTENDED BY AN ASSURANCE OF OUR CHRISTIAN STATE, BY A PEACEFULNESS OF CONSCIENCE, BY EFFECTUAL PRAYER, AND BY ABIDING FELLOWSHIP AND UNION WITH HIM WHO GAVE THE COMMANDMENTS, AND WHO GIVES US THE SPIRIT.

19. And hereby (literally, *in this*). Connection with the preceding verse is close. The loving of our brethren in deed and truth, so loving them as to endure self-denial for their sakes, is referred to as that, in the presence or exercise of which, not on the ground of which, we realize other great spiritual blessings. **We know.** The verb is future to the fulfilled condition, and also expresses certainty. Translate, *we shall* know (experimentally) **that we are of the truth,** of one nature with the truth, as if born of it. To be of the truth is more than to be truthful or true men. It is to be in a state of spiritual affinity with the truth of God as it is in Jesus, and including him. It is to be of the light of God (sons of light, John 12: 36), the reflection of his own nature. Spiritual attainments do not come single. If we have brotherly love, we have much with it. It brings other experiences with it; and one of these is the consciousness that we are neither deceivers nor self-deceived, that we belong to the spiritual sphere, that we are true Christians. **Before him.** Before God. (Ver. 20.) In his very sight. Even before the searching eye of his holiness. The position of the expression in the Greek suggests emphasis. The judgment day does not seem to be referred to as the day of final revelation, but the present period of experience, as the preceding sentence and the following verse make most natural. **Shall assure** (or, *persuade*). Co-ordinate with 'shall know,' and springing out of the same condition of love. **Our hearts.** As the seat of moral feeling, conscience, yielding disturbing accusation or pacifying approval. The tenor of the next verse makes this evident. The term elsewhere may include other springs of feeling. 'To persuade our hearts' is to make a plea before them as if they were judges; to satisfy the questionings of conscience, to bring it upon our side, so that it clears us and speaks peace. Of course, guilt and fear are removed from the conscience by the blood of Christ, but the full assurance of this work in its peaceful effects comes in connection with brotherly love, not apart from it. If the love be absent, the assurance of forgiveness, the consciousness of a clean conscience, are absent also. Love does not cleanse the conscience, but it supplies to it a satisfying argument that the guilt is taken away. One grace may be the advocate and light of another.

20. For if our heart condemn (know aught against) **us** (it is because), **God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.** Hence, if conscience is assured, it must be before God. John gives this verse as the reason (ὅτι) for emphasizing 'before him' (ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ) in connection with the assuring of the heart, in the preceding sentence. 'Before him' has the place of emphasis, and upon it hinges our present verse. This is so evident that the wonder is how the expositors could generally miss this key of the interpretation, as they have done. If conscience is persuaded and pacified merely in and by itself, that may be insufficient; but if it be done under the searching eye and full knowledge of God, then it is well done; and not otherwise can it be well done, since God is greater than our conscience and knows all things, and his holiness and knowledge must judge more perfectly. Conscience, "if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always goes on to anticipate a *higher* and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own." (Bishop Butler.) In the presence of brotherly love, the heart is peaceful in its own court and in God's. The second 'because' states the reason for the heart's condemnation. That condemnation is the echo of the voice of him who is greater and knows all things. The reason of the heart's sentence is back in God himself. In the action of conscience, therefore, there is a certain revelation of God. The relation of the word 'because' we have indicated in the translation by assuming an ellipsis, and sup-

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.
22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.
23 And this is his commandment, That we should

22 demn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that
23 are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should [1] believe in the name of his

1 Gr. *believe the name.*

plying the simple words 'it is.' The ellipsis is not foreign to John's peculiar style. See 2: 19; 3: 12.

21, 22. Beloved. See note on ver. 2. **If our heart condemn us not.** Being pacified in the presence of God. **Then have we confidence** (or *boldness*) **toward God.** Which is an advance upon a state of peace. This boldness is the sense of freedom and confidence. See note under 2: 28. When free from condemnation, we are more than free; we look up to God in perfect childlike confidence, and so come boldly unto a throne of grace. See next sentence. **And whatsoever we ask** (in the confidence just spoken of) **we receive of** (from, ἀπὸ, not παρὰ) **him**—namely, from God, to whom we come with freedom of conscience and supplication. The asking is that of those who are in the sphere of brotherly love, and bear the name of beloved. It is one form which the spiritual freedom of the child in his Father's house takes. God receives it as a proof of our confidence in him if we ask him for what we need, and he is not annoyed, but pleased. The free feeling toward God must go out in prayer. And the asking that comes of this child-spirit of the life of divine love, will be in faith, and in the Holy Spirit, and according to the will of God; and whatsoever a Christian asks of God with these conditions, he will receive from him, whether it be a temporal good or a spiritual grace. That word '*whatsoever*' is of wonderful range, and includes temporal things as much as it does spiritual; but it is true of him who prays in union with God and in the Spirit of supplications. (Zech. 12: 10; Rom. 8: 26.) The prayer, then, for small thing or great is a divine thought. Like a river, the spiritual child's prayer flows down into the ocean of God, and returns in dews and rains upon him. True prayer corresponds to the system of veins and arteries in the human body—life rising to the heart and coming from the heart. **Because we keep his commandments.** This marks the thoroughly obedient spirit that underlies effectual praying, and recalls the already implied relation of such praying to loving the brethren. For the commandments spoken of include in particular, as in 2: 3, the one on which John has dwelt so much, that of loving a brother with the love of Christ. The man who does this, which is the very essence of obedience, will obey in other things, and he will pray effectually for all things that truly concern him. (Ps. 138: 8.) He is the righteous man of whom James speaks, and whose fervent prayer availeth much. He is the righteous one to whose cry the ears of Jehovah are open, as the Psalmist declares. As a rule, save in the case of the sinner first crying for pardon, effectual praying is the fruit of a godly tree. "If ye *abide* in me, and my words *abide* in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15: 7.) It is not the occasional exertion of a lean, disobedient soul; it is the overflow of an habitual spirituality. **And do those things that are pleasing in his sight.** Keeping the commandments, especially that enjoining brotherly love, is beautiful in his sight, and is a reflection of his own nature. We ought to keep the commandments, in order to please God.

23. And connects the previous reference to commandments with an added unfolding definition. **This is his commandment**—namely, a brotherly love with its root in belief in Christ, or belief in Christ with its outgrowth in brotherly love; for so are they viewed as one by the writer, and called one commandment. They are inseparable. Inevitably, faith works by love. But though they develop as vitally one, they have a logical order, which is given in the statement of the verse. John's word surely suggests that what is cardinal in Christianity is belief in the Lord Jesus, and brotherly love, developed in a gracious unity. The term 'his' has its natural antecedent in God. **That** (ἵνα) states the end as well as substance of God's command. The command looks directly to the act of obedience, as well as the rule of it.

believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.
24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth *in* him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he
24 gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he gave us.

CHAPTER IV.

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the

Believing on the name (dative because that to which the action is given and on which it terminates) of Jesus Christ is believing in him as fulfilling all that his name and his revelation express. "It is to believe the gospel message concerning him, and him as living in it in all his fullness." (Alford.) **As he** (Christ) **gave us commandment.** If 'he' were God, the present statement would only repeat practically the first words of the verse. But making it Christ, the writer adds the confirmation and pattern of a well-known historical fact.

24. And resumes the subject of keeping the commandments (plural) begun in the last part of ver. 22. **He that keepeth his commandments.** Including the double cardinal command of ver. 23, and others. In the present verse these commands are referred to Christ as their author, to whom the last preceding words have called the writer's thought. The following words about a mutual indwelling refer more naturally to Christ, and to some of his very words in the Gospel of John. The ease with which our apostle can glide, in thought and affirmation, from Father to Son, in the discussions of truth and grace, shows what equal honor and what relation of unity they had in his mind. On the keeping of the commands, see note under 2: 3. The abiding of us in union with Christ, and of him in union with us, is presented as something which attends, accompanies, goes along with, keeping his commands, and is evidenced by this keeping, and is itself in turn fostered by it. **And hereby**—namely, by the Spirit given us. **We know.** As a continuous consciousness. **That he** (Christ) **abideth in us.** This is a matter of realization, of a knowledge as certain to us as a part of ourselves. From what shall such assurance spring? **By the Spirit which he** (Christ) **hath given** (or *gave*) **us.** 'Us' Christians, when we believed. The gift of the Holy Spirit is from the Father. But it is also from the Son, as many passages show. The Spirit, dwelling in us as a personal presence, reveals and witnesses of our union with Christ. It is his office to make our new life a consciousness. And this gift of the Spirit, working this knowledge, is the privilege of all believers. But not all who profess to have the Spirit have received him; hence the need of caution, which leads on to the earnest charge in the following section.

Ch. 4: 1–6. THE DUTY AND METHOD OF TESTING THOSE WHO COME TO US CLAIMING TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This is the occasion of bringing to view once more (see 2: 18) the false teachers, or antichrists. The apostle severely exposes them, and utters a sharp warning against them. We discover some reason why John should be called Boanerges.

1. Beloved. Set off against the enemies and errorists. See explanation under 3: 2. All who appreciate the new nature love them. Possibly we are too reserved in applying this name. **Believe not every spirit.** Here John refers to the spirits of men, considered as having religious capacity, and under the influence of the Spirit of God or the spirit of antichrist. At the close of the preceding chapter one might say: "But shall I take the word of every man who says he has the Spirit? Is a man's saying he has the Spirit enough for me? May I receive him on this?" "No," says John, "it is your bounden duty, and I command you not to believe every spirit, but to test every one thoroughly. Use reasonable tests to find out whether the spirit of him who comes to you with his religious claims has been truly imbued with God's Spirit, or is under some other influence." The command suggests that we should carefully examine and prove all who apply for a place in Christ's Church, as well as those who assume to be Christian teachers. By implication it forbids building up the Church with an

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:
3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is

spirits, whether they are of God; because many
2 false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is
3 of God: and every spirit that [1]confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the *spirit* of the anti-

1 Some ancient authorities read *annulleth Jesus*.

unconverted membership or recognizing an unregenerate ministry. We may mistake, but we are bound to use all reasonable means to discriminate. **Of God.** Allied to him in spiritual nature. **Because.** Reason making the trial necessary and urgent. One might ask: "Have any claimed to have the Holy Spirit, who are false in that claim?" "Yes," says the apostle; "and not a few, but many." The many false prophets are the same as the many antichrists of 2: 18. A prophet is one who speaks for another. The false prophet professes to speak for God and under his inspiration, as the antichrist falsely claims to be on the side of Christ and to represent his teaching. **Are gone out.** From the ranks of Christian profession (2: 19), and are now abroad spreading their errors in the world.

2. Hereby—or, in the operation of the test about to be stated. **Know ye** (or, *ye know*). The moment the test is named. With Alford, against almost all, we prefer the indicative to the imperative. It is more in John's confidential manner, and sounds more like the occasional *in this we know*. **The Spirit of God.** The Holy Spirit (of 3: 24) identifying himself with the human spirit to which he is given; the Holy Spirit working in men's spirits. This is the common view; probably the better view. Yet the spirit, whichever one it is, that belongs to God, may be meant. **Every spirit that confesseth.** Not merely once, but right on. The confession is something uttered before men. Unexpressed confession is a contradiction of terms, and a thing impossible. As Lange suggests, the very word means the oral confession of a truth or reality. Such confession is one of the fixed laws of the new life. There is no heavenly promise for him who is unwilling to confess Christ before men. The Bible does not own such an one as having salvation. (Rom. 10: 9, 10.) **That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.** The matter of the confession is not the mere name of Christ, which even the errorists confessed; but it is Christ in his genuine nature and office, having a particular history, and embodying a particular system of truth. It is that he is Jesus, and therefore the Saviour of a people. It is that he is Christ, and therefore the Anointed of God. It is that this Christ Jesus has come from God in the flesh, in a real, not a seeming humanity, with the soul and body of human nature. When John wrote, men were beginning to teach that Christ only appeared to have a human nature, as the angels who came to Lot and Manoah; and, being astray on the incarnation of Christ, they were necessarily at fault as to his priestly work and his saving power. It was but the divergence of a step, some might say, but it really involved a denial of the gospel salvation by the God-man, Christ, and his real death; and a person could not deny that essential scheme of salvation and be saved by it at the same time. This is a fearful warning to such as are not docile enough to receive the nature and work of Christ as they are; who wish to explain this or that away, who diverge by a little, as it seems from the total faith. In particular, we must believe aright concerning Christ. Gospel truth is of a definite type, which the regenerate will not miss. The spiritual mind will take to it as naturally as the bird to the air or the bee to its clover. It does make a difference what a man believes. **Is of God.** Is allied to him in spiritual nature through regeneration.

3. That confesseth not Jesus. '*The* Jesus' (τὸν Ἰησοῦν) that is set forth, and as he is set forth, in the foregoing verse; and hence omitting the words, **Christ is come in the flesh,** here given by the Common Version, but rejected by the critical text. The subjective negative (μή) before the word 'confesseth' suggests a wilful refusal. The Douay Version (Roman Catholic) renders this part of the verse, "that dissolveth Jesus" (!), without the support of any present manuscript. Suppose the one refusing to confess Jesus and his true office and nature, should be sincere, that does not alter the cardinal fact of his standing; he is not of (ἐκ) God. **And** (moreover) **this** (spirit not confessing

that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.
6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us;

christ, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and
4 now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is
5 in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they *as* of the world, and the world heareth
6 them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By

Christ in his true nature) **is that spirit of antichrist** (literally, *the antichrist*) **whereof ye have heard that it should come** (literally, *cometh*). This is the spirit answering to, and identified with, the spirit of antichrist. The Christian professor who has this spirit is an antichrist. See full explanation of the word 'cometh,' and especially of 'antichrist,' under 2: 18. Let it be recalled and emphasized, that an antichrist is not one who denies Christ outright; but one who, claiming to receive him, attributes to him such a nature, work, or doctrine as really makes another Christ of him. The name may be given to one so doing, or to the common spirit pervading all who do this. Along all the gospel age, this "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2: 3) has his types, men who, claiming the Christian name, are perverting the fundamental doctrine it represents.

4. Ye (emphatic) **are of God, little children, and have overcome them.** 'Little children' (note on 2: 1) were they; not boastful, not overbearing, not conceited, not originators of a religious philosophy of their own, not in haste to say what God ought to do and Christ ought to be; but men and women of the child-spirit, willing to receive Christ as he is, his word as he gave it, willing to confess the Lord Jesus in all his nature, work, truth; trusting, docile, obedient; such they were, and as such were of God, born of him, belonging to him, having his Spirit; tried by the tests, and not found wanting. And they had 'overcome' (Johannean word) those who had made other confession and were of a different spirit. They were not caught with their delusions, nor led into their snares. In all their contests with them they had triumphed, and should triumph. The shout of a king was among them. The errorists might be more eloquent, higher up in the social scale, more learned, but the little ones having the truth were the conquering people. **Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.** The reason of the prevalence of spiritual men is not in themselves. They need not take personal credit. The one in them, in union with their hearts, is God; naturally suggested by the previous clause, and by the relation of terms in 3: 10. The one 'in the world,' in union with the men of the world, is the devil. (John 14: 30; 2 Cor. 4: 4; Eph. 2: 2.) The world is a more general term than antichrist. All outside of God's light and life are of the world; while antichrist includes those who profess Christ but make him another Christ. But the latter belong also to the wider class of the world, as John's reasoning assumes; and if so, he that is in the world is in them. And God is stronger than he. Which the overcoming side is, therefore, cannot be doubtful.

5. They are of (ἐκ) **the world.** Of one nature with it. What the preceding words had implied as to the belonging of the false teachers is now expressly stated. They may be enrolled in some church bearing the Christian name; they may profess to be the only consistent expounders of Christianity; they may claim the Spirit divine; but in truth they are of the world, wholly under worldly motives, still unconverted, still in their sins. They may have a strong religiousness, but not the Spirit of God. **Therefore speak they of** (ἐκ) **the world.** Their doctrine necessarily partakes of the worldly nature within them and about them. They teach a system congenial to worldly men. **And the world heareth them.** "Adopts readily their teaching so accordant with its own spirit." (Hackett.) The world loves its own. See John 8: 47; 15: 19; 17: 14. How much in the circle of his Master's teaching and very words is John. Wonderful receptivity!

6. We (emphatic) **are of** (ἐκ) **God.** Allied to him in spiritual nature through the new birth; in contrast with the antichrists. And so in sympathy with God's doctrine, and speaking it. By 'we' John means especially himself and the true teachers, not excluding, however, any of the spiritual party. The Church speaks doctrine through its teachers. **He that knoweth God heareth us.** Ex-

he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God,

perimental knowledge, knowledge that receives its object. The hearing is more than that of the ear; it is willing adoption of the teaching, as being consonant with the heart's knowledge of God. The heart and the doctrine are in one sphere. **He that is not of God, heareth not us.** For the reason just suggested. It is not the spiritual mind (John 10: 8), but the unspiritual, that goes after the errorists, that prefers human philosophy to the true word. **Hereby know we.** That is, from the criteria just mentioned. What one most readily hears, shows what spirit he is of, to what nature or sphere he belongs. The knowledge is that of quality, hence the knowledge of discrimination. **The Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.** As they are in men. The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit (John 14: 17) in his relation to truth. The spirit of error is the devil in his fontal relation to all false doctrine. He who welcomes Christ's doctrines has the Spirit who gives them. He whose soul takes naturally to false doctrine is in affinity with the arch seducer, liar, and wanderer. The closing words of the section look back to the opening words.

7–13. CHRISTIAN LOVE ENJOINED IN NEW CONNECTIONS. IT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE BORN OF GOD, THAT WE KNOW GOD, THAT WE APPRECIATE GOD'S LOVE TO US, AND THAT GOD IS DWELLING IN US.

John resumes the great theme of brotherly love with which he closed the last chapter; "but this time in nearer and deeper connection with our birth from God, and knowledge of him who is himself love." (Alford.) Having just spoken of signs of the presence of the Spirit; he is led again to that great demonstration of the new life afforded in the exercise of love. Love, he maintains is not only a duty, but belongs to the very nature of our divine kinship through regeneration; and hence, if wanting, our divine life is without reality.

7. Beloved. See notes on 3: 2; 4: 1. **Let us love one another.** See note on 3: 18. How much John dwells on this grace! How large a part of Christianity it is to him! Along with faith, with which it is organically one, it is paramount. (3: 23.) Faith unites to Christ; and love, to each other. New convictions of the importance and indispensableness of brotherly love come with the study of this Epistle. More plainly we see that he who has it not is not a Christian, however correct he may be in other respects. A new heart will not be persistently hard toward a brother. That is a fixed point. To carry hatred and spite into the fellowship of Christ's Church, is to carry in the spirit of Cain and the devil. It is to take a piece of hell into heaven. What this love is, as distinguished from general benevolence and neighborliness, has been fully stated. It is the family affection of God's house, as peculiar, as exclusive, as a mother's love for her own child. Did not Jesus love John otherwise than he did Herod and Caiaphas? This love of spiritual kinship, like the gift of the Spirit, distinguishes Christianity generically from all other religions. It takes it from their category. Let it be added that it is a grace which we are called to exercise, not toward perfect or agreeable Christians only, but toward very imperfect and not wholly congenial Christians; for many such there are. We must exercise a love that, going through the imperfections of a brother, loves him for Christ's sake, even at the cost of self-denial. If Christ loved us, as some Christians bestow their love—namely, on a principle of loving only agreeable Christians, where might we stand? **For love is of God.** Of one nature with him. Not natural love, which all men have, but Christian love. It is not anything we have by nature; does not spring out of natural relationships; is not born of the flesh; does not belong to the plane of earthly loves; is not, as some have said, natural love directed to new objects; but is a heavenly principle, created in us out of the very nature of God; in God before it was in us. (Rom. 5: 5.) "The appetite for good is from God, the unchangeable good; which appetite is love, of which John saith, 'Love is of God.' Not that its beginning is of us, and its perfecting of God, but that the whole of love is from God." (Augustine.) **And every one that loveth**

8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.
9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

8 and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth
9 not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested [1] in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live
10 through him. Herein is love, not that we loved

1 Or, *in our case.*

is born (or, *begotten*) **of God and knoweth God.** Love is the evidence of the new birth and of spiritual knowledge. If one has this divine principle, it proves that he himself has a nature from God and an experience of God. Love is the predicate of the renewed state, and the logical development of spiritual knowledge.

8. He that loveth not, knoweth (or, *knew*) **not God.** That is, never knew God at any time; or perhaps when he professed such knowledge. The past tense makes the statement peculiarly significant and strong. **For God is love.** The expression is one of the deepest in the Bible. Its meaning will ever grow in the mind of the growing Christian, and still be unfathomable. It is said not alone of the loving action of God, not alone of the tender feelings of God, but of the very nature of God. Love is a component of his being, the conscious state of his being. There is no part of his nature that is wanting in this element. It is co-extensive with his life. One, therefore, who in the new birth gets something of God's nature, must get a portion of the divine love. It is simply impossible to be born from above, without receiving this principle. He, therefore, who does not love, in the Christian sense, is not spiritually related to him, and hence does not know him, and cannot. Or, he that loves not, knows not love; and if he knows not love, he knows not God, for God is love. A close texture of truth. [Compare the statements, "God is a spirit," John 4: 24; "God is light," 1 John 1: 5, with this "God is love."—A. H.]

9. In this—namely, in sending the Divine Son with the motive of our salvation. **Was manifested the love of God toward us.** [Rather, *in us*—ἐν ἡμῖν.—A. H.] That is, at the time of our conversion, by means of the salvation-facts we then became experimentally acquainted with. Thus were manifested the fact, nature, and degree of the love of God. **Because that** (better, as in Revised Version, *that*, the fact that; declarative, not causal) **God sent** (*hath sent*); sent from himself in heaven, involving the personal preexistence of the One sent. Hath sent forth at a particular moment in the past; but the event is viewed as prolonged in its operation, and in its vital relation to the experience of believers; hence the perfect tense. **His only begotten Son** "expresses an unique kindredship of nature, and involves a correspondent affection (Ps. 22: 20, Septuagint) of him who begat; expresses an eternal relation, not eternal generation." (Hackett.) The term 'only begotten' (μονογενής) is applied to the only child of earthly parents in three instances by Luke (7: 12; 8: 42; 9: 38), and once in Heb. 11: 17. Otherwise it is used in the New Testament only by John, and by him applied to the Son of God. The total expression seems, in our passage at least, to mark a relation of a filial nature held by the Son before he came in the flesh, and making it especially the proof of divine love that he should be sent forth. At the same time, it must be said, that the event of the incarnation is sufficient of itself to justify the full title, or either part of it. All true Christians are, in an important sense, sons of God, having been "begotten again unto a lively hope" (1 Peter 1: 3), and having "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8: 15.) "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons (υἱοὶ) of God." (Rom. 8: 14.) But Christ is not merely *a* Son of God, he is *the* Son, having the full nature of God, bearing a unique relation to him in eternity itself, as well as having a unique history in the incarnation. For the Father to give up such a Son for a mission into this world of rebellion and sin was no ordinary test or manifestation of love. Some picture of it would be to send our dearest one into a lazaretto to save the dying, or into a camp of rebels to proffer conditions of peace. **That we might live through him.** The intention of Christ's mission. An effectual, and not a contingent, purpose, as regards believers. The object of the mission, having reference to our greatest good, impresses us with God's love, as does

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he
loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our
sins.
11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love
one another.
12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love
one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is per-
fected in us.
13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in
us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the
11 propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved
12 us, we also ought to love one another. No man
hath beheld God at any time: if we love one
another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfect-
13 ed in us: hereby know we that we abide in him,
and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

the self-sacrificing means to effect it. The giving up of the Son, the giving him to come into such a world, and the thoughtful, merciful object of the mission, combine to give the believer an impressive view of the extent and the quality of God's love. The 'living' is the true immortality reached in regeneration and resurrection through the mediation (διά) of Christ. The whole verse condenses a volume of truth. It is a remarkable statement of the mission of Christ, and its spring in the eternal love of God. It demonstrates the love-nature asserted in the foregoing verse.

10. Herein is love. In its full nature, so as to be marked and known. This love is not manifested by the fact that we Christians have loved God. That is not extraordinary. But it is by the fact that he loved us back in eternity, without any love in us as the motive; and in the additional fact that, self-moved, he sent his own Son a propitiation in respect to our sins. Compare Rom. 5: 8. Loving sinners, so as to redeem them by the work of the atonement, is love. There you see it, and see what it is. On this work of propitiation, see note on 2: 1, 2. Through our present passage, the soul of John Milne, as a convicted sinner, was brought into light and peace.

11. Beloved. See on 3: 2; 4: 1. The term introduces a fervent appeal and faithful admonition. The influence of such a word under such circumstances is obvious. **If God so** (emphatic) **loved us** (while we were yet sinners, and so much as to sacrifice his Son for us) **we ought also** (better, *we also ought*) **to love one another.** We ought surely to love our own brethren, if he loved us sinners; and to love them enough to sacrifice something for them. It is the argument from the greater to the less. The argument of gratitude is implied. Also the argument of the new nature; since where is our likeness to God if we do not love, as he is proved to have done?

12. No man hath seen (*beheld*) **God at any time.** Although this opening is apparently abrupt, yet the connection of thought between this verse and the preceding is evident and simple: We ought to love one another; and, though we may not see God with these outward eyes, yet if we thus love, God is in us as really as if we saw him. He is where his love is, for love, as a divine principle, is a part of himself. God the Father is the one spoken of, and that beholding of him, which has thus far been denied to mortal man, is of the bodily eyes. Men have seen, with the outward vision, the express image of the Father in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1: 3; John 14: 9), but not God the Father by himself as he is. (John 1: 18.) He whom Adam and Abraham and Moses saw was not the Father, but the Word, the Angel of Jehovah, the veiled higher nature of Christ before he came in the flesh. **If we love one another, God dwelleth** (or, *abideth*) **in us.** God is where his love is, for it is inseparable from himself. It is himself, just as his Spirit is. Love is of God in nature and source. (Ver. 7.) Loving one another, in the spiritual sense, is the exercise of God's nature in us. The loving heart contains him; Jehovah-Shammah. **And his love** (the one divine principle of love whether in him or in us) **is perfected in us.** Made complete, brought to maturity. This happens when, experiencing God's love in us, we love one another. A tree reaches maturity, fulfills its end, in bearing fruit. The same is true of the plant of divine love in the heart. Brotherly love is God's love fulfilling its end and bearing fruit.

13. Hereby (or, *in this*)—namely, in the fact that God has given us the Holy Spirit—**we know that we dwell** (or, *abide*) **in him, and he in us.** See 3: 24, where the same words are used of our union with Christ, following John 15: 4, 5. Here the apostle means our union with God the Father, so easy is the transition in thought or experience from Son to Father,

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.
15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
16 And we have known and believed the love that

14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the
15 world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.
16 And we know and have believed the love which

so natural is it to honor the one as the other, so fitted are the divine predicates to the one or the other. If we are united to Christ, we are united to God in Christ. In ver. 12, John had said, if we love, God abides in us; but can this be known? "Yes," says he, "we may know it, we do know it, as true, in the strongest possible statement of it. Our divine union, which our love implies, is a matter of certain knowledge. It is a fact of experience. We know it as much as we know our existence." How do we know it? By what evidence? By this—**Because he hath given us of his Spirit.** For his presence in us declares the fact; and his voice in us is witness to the fact. The Spirit in our hearts is the seal and assurance of our union with God. It is the very element and life of the union. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. The gift of the Spirit carries with it every fact of the new life. It proves all. The root of love in us is God, whose presence the Spirit certifies and reveals.

14–16. THE FACT OF THE MUTUAL INDWELLING OF GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN IS ASSURED TO US IN THE VERY TERMS OF SALVATION, AND IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN US.

This is additional to the assurance of the Spirit. The actual spiritual connection of God with the soul of the renewed man is something which John would strongly declare and confirm. Our divine union is a first truth with him.

14. And takes up a new and additional line of proof of the living union of God and his people. **We.** The Christian party, through the apostles. **Have seen** (or *beheld*). Have the evidence of our own eyes, accompanied with careful contemplation. See 1: 1, 2. **And do testify** (or, *bear witness*). Continue to do so, as witnessing to the gospel facts is not for once. **That the Father.** So named here from his relation to Christ, rather than to John. **Sent** (better, *hath sent*). In the past, but the influence and effects are still present. See on ver. 9. **The Son to be the** (better, *a*) **Saviour of the world.** 'Saviour' is a distinctive title of the Son, declaring the mission on which he was sent into the world. He was sent to provide, in his own person, salvation for the world, which salvation is availed of and actually applied, through belief and confession. See Rom. 10: 9, and our next verse. See notes in full on 2: 2. To those who receive him, the Son of God is Saviour from what? From guilt and condemnation, from despair, from a nature of sin, from error, from a body of death, from the world, from Satan, from an eternal hell; requiring a great Saviour, with all his deity and all his humanity, all his blood and all his Spirit.

15. Whosoever shall confess. As a part of the plan by which Christ becomes an effectual Saviour. It is a stipulation under the salvation proclaimed in the preceding verse, which explains the mood and tense. The confession is that from the inmost being, from the whole being, uttered openly and with the mouth. [It seems to me that the aorist subjective is here used in the sense of the Latin future-perfect; thus, "Whoever shall have confessed that Jesus is the Son of God," etc. Yet the translation given by the Revised English Bible, the Bible Union, and by Alford, Noyes, and others, namely: "Whoever confesseth," etc., is sufficiently exact. The Latin Vulgate reads: *Quisquis confessus fuerit.* Compare Winer, § 43. 3. b.; Buttmann, "Grammar of the New Testament Greek," p. 219; and "Proceedings of the Am. Phil. Association for 1877," pp. 22, 23.—A. H.] **That Jesus** (the man) **is** (also) **the Son of God.** This is the matter of the saving confession, or the basal part of it. See on ver. 2. **God dwelleth** (or, *abideth*) **in him.** In that man who thus confesses, whosoever he is, and however great a sinner. A simple statement of fact included under the very provision and terms of salvation by Christ, sealed by apostolic testimony. **And he in God.** This completes the expression of the perfect living union of God and the regenerate soul.

16. And introduces an additional confirmation of the living union with God, co-ordinate with that in ver. 14, 15. **We have**

God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.
17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth

God hath [1]in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.
17 Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he
18 is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear

1 Or, *in our case.*

known and believed. Another certainty additional to the 'we have seen' in ver. 14, and in the same tense. That was the certainty of sight; this of experience. The saying that we have both 'known and believed' suggests the intimate relation of spiritual knowledge and belief. They both have as their object things invisible, and doubtless they are commingled in one act of a soul coming into life. "True faith is a faith of knowledge and experience; true knowledge is a knowledge of faith." (Lücke.) Note the order of the verbs. There is a persuasion that comes of experience. **The love that God hath to** (*in*) **us.** Not "in regard to us" (Alford), but literally *in us.* In the new life we have experienced a new principle of love in our hearts which we have intuitively recognized as something from God, as his love in us, the love he has in us. Now, John, recalling the proposition in ver. 8, says **God is love,** and hence this love of his in us, which we know and believe, is God himself. And, of course, then, it follows that **he that dwelleth** (or, *abideth*) **in love** (as he does who has God's love in him) **dwelleth** (or, *abideth*) **in God** (emphatic), **and God in him.** In ver. 12, the point is the fact of our union with God, implied in our love. Here the point is the assurance or confirmation of the fact, derived from our personal experience of love.

17–21. Further Comments on Spiritual Love: (1) In Perfection, it takes away Fear; (2) Its Exercise toward God Accounted for; (3) Love to God Implies Love to Our Brother.

17. Herein. In the personal *experience* of love, and especially of the union with God which it implies, just spoken of; expressing the manner or means of love's perfection with us. Or, in this interest, with this intention—namely, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; expressing the end or purpose of love's perfection with us. Either explanation is worthy; the former possibly having the preference. Other constructions seem improbable. **Is our love made perfect.** The Revised Version is correct: *Is love made perfect with us* (μεθ' ἡμῶν). Love has been perfected, matured, fulfilled, not in itself, but with us, in the conscious life and fruit-bearing of our souls. **That** (ἵνα, *for this end that*) **we may have boldness in the day of** (*the*) **judgment** states a divine end of the perfection of love with us. It is that we may, being full of divine love, and carrying along with us the calm consciousness of being one with God thereby produced, meet the searching judgment of the last day, free from all sense of condemnation and perfect in confidence. In perfected love there is a conscious union with God that makes us bold and confident before the divine Judge himself. See 2: 28; 3: 19–21. In this union we cannot be condemned any more than God himself. Judgment is coming, but he who is hid in the pavilion of God's nature is as safe and confident as was Noah in the ark. **Because as he is, so** (or, *even so*) **are we in this world** expands and states more explicitly the reason, or rather philosophy, of this complete confidence in the judgment day. 'He,' or, *that one,* is he before whom we shall come in that great day, whether it be God, or, as generally understood, Christ, viewed as possessing the divine nature. The reasoning is: This confidence we shall have at the judgment, because, in the love and union of God with us, we shall bear there a nature already one with that of him who will judge us. As he is, in his spiritual nature, in the other world, so by divine union are we already in this world, and that likeness of nature will insure confidence in the day of judgment. This explanation is quite harmonious with that basis of love and divine indwelling on which the apostle is arguing, and seems almost self-evident. Notwithstanding, we have Ebrard saying, "We contemplate the words in question without any clear conception of their meaning!"

18. There is no fear in love. In the great divine principle of love, whether in God or in us. In it there is no fear, no servile fear,

out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
19 We love him, because he first loved us.
20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made
19 perfect in love. We love, because he first loved
20 us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, [1]cannot love God whom he
21 hath not seen. And this commandment have we

1 Many ancient authorities read *how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

no fear of condemnation or punishment, no fear that hath the least pain in it. The love in God cannot have any of this. The love in us, one in nature, cannot have any of it. Yet there is a fear, not now in the apostle's thought, which is consistent with spiritual love, and perhaps a part of it. **But perfect love casteth out fear.** Referring to the presence of divine love in our hearts, and perfected there. In its completeness it fills the soul, and thereby shuts out fear which is in us prior to such love. Two spheres cannot occupy the same place. But how does perfect love in us expel fear? In the experience of it, we feel completely united to God, as it were a part of him. We look out upon the world, upon opposition, upon death, upon judgment itself, from the inclosing being of God, from the canopy, the fortification of his own person. In the consciousness of this union we cannot fear evil, any more than God can fear a part of himself. (Rom. 8: 1.) **Because fear hath torment** (better, *punishment*). For thus we must render this last word (κόλασις). Compare the only three other New Testament passages (Matt. 25: 46; Acts 4: 21; 2 Peter 2: 9) where this word, or its root, occurs. It is the punishment of the great day (ver. 17), with which fear is connected, and which it already takes hold upon as if it were a part of itself. "Fear, by anticipating punishment, has it even now; bears about a foretaste of it and so partakes of it." (Alford.) There can be nothing of this, nothing of painful apprehension in love, and therefore the statement in the previous part of the verse must be true. The last proposition in the verse is added (δέ) as an inference or complement of the words 'perfect love casteth out fear,' and is slightly adversative.

19. We (in contrast with those who fear and have condemnation) **love him.** In the fullest, absolute sense. The word *him* in the Common Version should be omitted, as it is not found in the critical text. The indicative agrees best with the emphatic 'we.' **Because he** (God, ver. 10) **first loved us.** In eternity; and so sent Christ into the world to save us. (Ver. 9.) His love to us preceded our love. It was the cause or reason of ours, which implies in the apostle's thought that it furnished the model or type of ours. Our love is a thing rising from God's love, and so is naturally like it. But God's love went out to men. Ours therefore, to be full and perfect, must (ver. 12) go out to men, even our brethren.

20. If any man say (at any time, aorist), **I love God, and hateth** [better, *hate*. The present subjective is used in this case because the hatred is a continuous feeling.—A. H.] **his brother.** Hating is antithetical to loving. There are no indifferent or neutral moral conditions. In not loving, there is the condition of hating when occasion comes. **He is a liar.** He not only professes falsely, but denies the very nature of love. Our love is the production (ver. 19) of God's love, of one kind with it. But God's love goes out to *us* of the brotherhood. Therefore ours must embrace the same company. If it does not, it is not true love from God. **For.** To make the falsity of the claim still more evident by adducing a principle often illustrated in common life. **He that loveth not his brother.** It is implied in the question that the brother is of the same nature and family with God (5: 1), and hence, like God, is a true object of spiritual love, whether he be seen or unseen. The question also implicitly recognizes the well-known advantage of immediate sight as a means of kindling love for a lovable object. For example, we may love absent Christians, but how is that love enlivened when the social meeting brings them about us. The sight of the eyes moves the heart. (Acts 17: 16.) If, then, we do not love the brother whom we see, how can we, though one may claim it, love him of related nature, whom we have not seen? Can any one tell? This is additional to the consideration that it is the nature of divine love to love the brethren as well as God; and if one is loved, the other is by

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

CHAPTER V.

WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth him that begat
2 loveth him also that is begotten of him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when

necessity of nature. [It ought perhaps to be noticed that the text approved by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort has, in the clause before the last, "not" (οὐ) instead of 'how' (πῶς); and we should therefore read, "For he that loveth not his brother cannot love God." The manuscript authority for the common text appears to be inferior to that for the text approved by these editors.—A. H.]

21. And (besides all the rest) **this commandment** (named in the closing part of the verse) **have we from him.** That is, from God; it may be through Christ, and remembered by John as coming from his Master's lips. It is not the commandment embraced in the summary of the law (Matt. 22: 37-39), as claimed by Alford, for that relates to our neighbor, our fellow men in general; while, as we have shown again, the love-command of Christ relates to the inner circle of regenerate men, our brethren in Christ. **That** (ἵνα) introduces not only the purport of the commandment, but the end intended to be secured by it. What an enforcement of love to the brethren! The one loving God must love his brother from gratitude (4: 11), from the divine pattern and nature of love itself (4: 19), from a principle of common sense (4: 20), and now (ver. 20) from the strong command which expresses directly God's will in the matter.

Ch. 5: 1-5. FAITH IN JESUS AS THE CHRIST, THE NEW BIRTH, BROTHERLY LOVE, KEEPING GOSPEL COMMANDS, AND OVERCOMING THE WORLD, ALL VITALLY CONNECTED, AND INVOLVED IN EACH OTHER.

These principles, obediences, victories, belong to one life, as much so as the branches of one family, root and stalk, flower and fruit. The divine anatomy, the heavenly philosophy, of the new life, is still pursued. There is sweetness, as well as depth, in the subject. It makes the mind work; it also makes the heart warm and glow. Here is the kind of study that will make heaven the happier. Here reasoning and knowledge are also spiritual repast. Blessed are they whose hearts kindle with such themes.

1. Whosoever believeth (from the heart, from the centre of being, with a faith that is a part of one's self) **that Jesus is the Christ** (the one prophesied, and anointed of God) **is born** (or *begotten*) **of God.** From, or out of (ἐκ), God's nature, by the Holy Spirit, and so has become a child in the family. The apostle is setting forth the object to be loved, in the light of its true nature. **And every one that loveth him that begat** (that is God), **loveth him also that is begotten of him**—that is, God's child, of one nature with him. The apostle lays it down as a fact, if we do love God, we also love all that is of his nature, hence we love our brethren who have his nature. It is an argument implied in 4: 20, but here put in unmistakable words, that we may certainly know who the brother to be loved is, and the divine reason of the love to him. Note how much is believed when one believes that Jesus is the Anointed of God, by tracing out the deep truths and facts involved in that wonderful epithet as applied to him. Note also the importance of this verse as a proof-text, bearing upon the relation of regeneration to faith. Shining is the action of the sun; believing is the action of the regenerate heart. Where, then, you see the action of belief, know that regeneration is already, its source.

2. By (or *in*) **this**—namely, in loving God and doing his commands. **We know that we love the children of God.** Those begotten by him, the same spoken of in the preceding verse. How may we know that we love those who have partaken of the divine nature. We may have a kind of love for Christians from various motives, as that they are of our church, sect, or party; are our friends, or are naturally amiable; but we must love them also, and chiefly, because they are the children of God and reflect his

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.
4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

3 we love God, and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.
4 For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the

nature, and for this reason we must love all Christians, and not a select part. But how shall we know if we have this love to God's children as such? **When** (in whatever instance) **we love God,** who is of one spiritual nature with his children, then we may know that our love is spiritual and exercised for spiritual reasons. In 4: 20 love to the brethren proves our love to God. Here the converse proposition emerges. The final reason of loving God's people is in God himself, on a principle that leads us to love them all. **And keep** (literally, *do*, ποιῶμεν, not τηρῶμεν) **his commandments.** Gospel commands; obeyed because they are God's commands, They include belief, confession, baptism, observing the Supper, meeting together, giving, enduring, and the like. He who does these truly, does them from a principle of obedience; has a heart to obey. This man may know that he loves the brethren. For he can discover that his love to the brethren, which is a duty and an obedience, belongs to a general principle of obedience in his heart. Regard for one command is regard for the many. The apostle here, as elsewhere, emphasizes the principle of obedience in the new life. Our love is not all sentiment, but has the strong vigor of duty and obedience. The Christian is an obeying person. Or, the connection between doing the commands and loving the brethren may be as follows: He who loves the brethren, loves God; and if he loves God, he regards his will or commands, and does them. So that the doing of the commands becomes an evidence of loving the brethren. This may indicate more truly John's process of thought.

3. For (γάρ) explains the putting together of the two preceding things; loving God and commandment-keeping. **This is the love of God.** This is its nature; its natural working. **That we keep his commandments.** To love another, and be indifferent to his will, is an impossibility, in divine or human relations. So vital is the connection, that it may be said, that to love is to obey. Love prompts obedience, as the life of the vine takes the form of fruit. Let those who profess the love of God, and yet are careless of his commands, be admonished. They are denying the very instinct of the love-nature. The conjunction 'that' (ἵνα), with its verb, anticipates a usage of the modern Greek, and is in place of the infinitive. See Godet, "Com. on John," 1: 27. **And his commandments are not grievous.** 'Are not grievous,' heavy, difficult, to those within the sphere of spiritual life and divine love, as the causal bearing of the next verse implies. See Matt. 11: 30; Gen. 29: 20. Love makes easy and blessed those commands which are crossing to the old nature. In the doing of them difficulties melt away, and there is a sense of freedom and delight. The love that prompts to the command, makes the soul work easily through it. (Ps. 119: 32, 45.) The new nature is, as it were, its own spring and help in all that is required of it, and divine commands are fitted to it, as opportunity is fitted to man.

4. For introduces a reason why the commands are not grievous; it is because in the new birth we come into a state of victory, actually begun, and ideally complete. It is assumed that any difficulty of obedience is caused by the world—that is, by worldly feeling within, or worldly opposition without. The lust of the world and the pride of life in us impart a burdensome aspect to the divine commands; and the world sometimes opposes from without, by tempting, persecution, or otherwise. It is a foe to spiritual obedience. But whatsoever is born of God, overcomes the world; goes on to do so. It has a conquering principle in it, and hence must sweep difficulties out of the way. The conflict will be great sometimes, and the world is not subdued at once; nevertheless, the new nature goes on to victory, and overcomes wholly in the end. For it is like God. **Whatsoever is born** (or, *has been begotten*) **of God.** Whatever; whether it be man, or man's nature, or anything else. "The neuter affirms the universality of the idea more strongly than the masculine." (Hackett.) Compare John 3: 6; 6: 37, 39; 17: 2. **The world.** "Whatever is adverse to God's Spirit. So the de-

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?
6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.

5 world, *even* our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus
6 is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ: not [1]with the water

1 Gr. in.

pravity of our nature is a part of the world." (Calvin.) **And this is the victory that overcometh** (or, *overcame*). The indefinite past (aorist) tense is used. The victory that has overcome in each instance is meant. In every such instance, the victory is looked upon as accomplished, already finished, with the exertion of faith; hence the past tense. **Our faith.** "The identifying of the victory with the faith which gained it is a concise and emphatic way of linking the two inseparably together, so that wherever there is faith there is victory." (Alford.) Faith is the action or means by which the new nature overcomes. And why? Because it appropriates Christ the Conquering One, and identifies us with him. We thus enter into his strength, which is the secret of victory. (John 15: 5; Phil. 4: 13; 1 John 4: 4; also Rom. 7: 24, 25; 1 Cor. 15: 57.) It is, then, faith taking Christ's strength that conquers the world, and every difficulty. Once when McCheyne was feeling almost overcome by the world and sin, these words of John came to him. His faith realized a conquering Christ. He was conscious of relief and victory, and exclaimed, "A wonderful passage!"

5. This verse defines the overcoming faith more expressly, and declares victory impossible without it. As to the faith, it must (1) centre in the personal Christ, (2) take him for what he is, Son of God and Son of man in one true abiding person. Then does he unite himself with the soul, and become its life and its victory. The new nature, then, does not overcome by inaction, but by acting through a definite faith. In the action, the Spirit is received and the power given. But our verse also declares that the world can be overcome in no *other* way. John challenges his readers to produce a single instance of such victory except by this faith in Christ. "Who is the man," he says, "where is he, who ever saw him, that conquers the world but by this gospel faith"? The man does not exist. There is no other principle or means of victory. One might as well think of rising from earth against gravitation, as to think of putting the world under his feet, save by faith in Christ. Without it, the man is a part of the very world he would overcome. But with it, he is united to another sphere, and is lifted above his old self, where he can meet the world at an advantage. Two grave lessons in reform present themselves: (1) One may break off an evil habit, or association, and yet, without gospel faith, have the world reign supreme in him. (2) Mere resolutions, or self-respect, or human religion, or asceticism, or monastic seclusion, will not subdue the world.

6–12. THE WITNESS WITHOUT AND WITHIN THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD AND THE CONTAINER OF LIFE.

The overcoming faith of the former section leads the apostle here to confirm to his readers the object of this faith in his true historical personality as being the source of the eternal life which faith receives.

6. This is he that came (in his earthly manifestation) **by** (διά, *through*) **water and blood, even Jesus Christ.** Both true man and the anointed, prophesied, one of God. This is he, this is the very one, who came through (by way of) water and blood, and is witnessed to, in his true life-power, thereby. There has been boundless dispute as to what is meant by the water and the blood, which, connected with our Lord's earthly history, were witnesses of him as the Messiah and the Life. As to the water, some have understood it to be the water that came from the Saviour's pierced side, noted in John 19: 34; some, the baptism enjoined on believers in the Great Commission; some, the word of God. (interpreting the term in John 3: 5 of the same!); some, his own baptism in Jordan. And there are other explanations that need not be mentioned. A careful weighing of the entire section and its purpose leaves hardly a doubt that 'water' refers to our Lord's baptism, a most important event of his earthly manifestation, and pointing, as John 1: 31, 33 shows, to Jesus as the Possessor and Giver of life, and hence the Christ. John calls it by the name of 'water,' because it is the element, rather than the act, of baptism, which

And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.
7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.
8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.
9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of

only, but [1]with the water and [1]with the blood.
7 And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the
8 Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood:
9 and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the

1 Gr. *in.*

is thought of as the witness, The 'water' of his baptism symbolized the life which he had without measure, or the Spirit of life belonging to him, and hence was a witness that he was truly the Son of God. Is not this the very point John is aiming to establish on various testimonies, that Christ is the Fountain of life? See ver. 11. And if Fountain of life, he is Son of God. And 'blood' is another witness. By the 'blood,' not the Lord's Supper (that is far-fetched, without parallel, and hardly pertinent to the particular point being proved), but the death of Christ is referred to. And John uses the term 'blood' because it is not the dying itself which is in mind, but the life poured out, of which blood is the symbol. See Lev. 17: 11, 14. Christ's blood of sacrifice pointed to the life he gave for men, and hence bore witness to him as the Possessor and Giver of life. Our life was in the blood. And the Author of life is the Christ. **Not by water only, but by water and blood.** Literally, *Not in* (ἐν) *the water only, but in the water and in the blood.* The article 'the' and preposition 'in' are prefixed to 'water' and 'blood' in each case, and point out the objects as those named before; also as weighty and significant; and as they are used with each term, they mark the independence of the water and blood as witnesses. The use of 'in' shows that its objects are now recalled as elements in which, rather than means by which, Christ manifested himself. The general purpose of this part of the verse is to show that Christ is proved by his witnesses to be, not only the life of the world, but such life by death. **And it is the Spirit that beareth witness.** The Spirit, given in connection with Christ's coming, both at Pentecost and as a permanent blessing in the Church, is the most direct witness (John 15: 26) to the same fact that Christ is the Source and Giver of life, and therefore the Son of God. **Because the Spirit is** (*the*) **truth.** Not the symbol (as water, or blood), but the truth itself, directly uttering God's nature; and for that reason a witness to be at once acknowledged, and speaking directly what the others utter indirectly. Before taking up the next verses, observe that all after the words "bear record" (μαρτυροῦντες) in ver. 7, extending to the words "the Spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμα) in ver. 8, should be blotted out of the Epistle. It is found in no New Testament manuscript before the sixteenth century. No determination of modern criticism is more certain than the spurious character of this part of the text. And it seems utterly foreign to the argument John is evolving. We take up the genuine part.

7, 8. For. Reason for citing the Spirit as a witness with the 'water' and the 'blood.' **There are three that bear witness in earth.** They are all viewed as if personal witnesses, taking that character from the leading, interpreting witness, the Holy Spirit. And they are three; the rule for testimony did not require more. (2 Cor. 13: 1.) **The Spirit, and the water, and the blood.** By the repeated connectives and articles, they are made as distinct as possible. The Spirit here leads. His testimony is the more direct and immediate, and takes up into itself that of the other two. **And these** (*the*) **three agree in** (*the*) **one.** The one thing, the one purport. They all bear in one direction, speak to one truth, that Jesus is the Source of life, and hence the Son of God. That life, life, belongs pre-eminently to him, is their one voice, their one evidence. If so, he is the one anointed with the Spirit, who is life; and if thus Anointed, he is the Christ, the Son of God. And the water of baptism, the blood of atonement, and, most directly, the Holy Spirit in his renewing work, are now still speaking of him who is the Life, and asserting his divine nature before us. Must we not believe with the highest faith?

9. If we receive (as we do; 'if' with the indicative) **the witness of men, the wit-**

God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.
10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.
11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness
10 concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne con-
11 cerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

ness of God (whatever it is) **is greater.** And therefore (argument from the less to the greater) ought even more readily to be received. **For this is the witness of God,** etc. Better, as in the Revised Version: "*For the witness of God is* (pre-eminently) *this.*" In the warmth of writing, John becomes compressed, elliptical. "And why," he silently says, "do I speak of the testimony of God? This is the reason, because this consentient testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, is nothing short of being the testimony of God himself." **Which**—rather, *that* (ὅτι not ἥν, according to ℵ A B and most versions). **He hath** (an admitted and well-known fact) **testified of** (*concerning*) **his Son.** That testimony is still (perfect tense) extant, and calls for the implicit faith of men.

10. He that believeth on (literally, *into;* the faith reaching into and lodging in a personal object) **the Son of God hath the witness in himself.** The testimony of God concerning his Son, that he is his true Son, and the Giver of life. By believing in Christ, this divine testimony becomes a part of one's self, a self-evidencing experience. The believer has a joyful, firm conviction, from which nothing can move him, that Christ is a living reality, the very Fountain of life. He that believes has the testimony in himself; he that believes not, has the testimony, but it is outside of him. The passage before us has been regarded as parallel with Rom. 8: 16. The two passages are alike in this, that they both speak of an inward witness of the Spirit in experience; but they differ in this, that in the one case, the Spirit testifies and assures of our own sonship, while in the other case he testifies and assures of Christ's Sonship. Both passages are, at their root, related to Psalm 25: 14. It is the experimental knowledge of spiritual facts possessed by the regenerate. **He that believeth not** (μὴ, a supposed case) **God** (his word, or testimony) **hath made** (and his abiding unbelief continues to make; perfect tense) **him a liar.** If God were a liar, he could not treat his testimony differently. He who receives not God's testimony made to the reason of all, by the water, the blood, and the Spirit, treats him just as if he could not be believed. And unbelief is a serious responsibility, when it is tantamount to treating God as a liar. John, in his negative putting of the subject, brings out the impressive fact that the unbeliever not only fails of the inward witness of the truth, but positively arraigns the veracity of God. **Because,** etc., introduces a further statement, confirming the appalling truth just uttered. O unbelief, boasting thy rationalism, thou art the most irrational! The least conscious of fault, or sin, thou art the most sinful! Thou puttest thy God with liars, and his gospel with fables! [On the change of negative (to οὐ) in this clause Winer remarks: "In the last words, the apostle passes quickly from the mere conception to the fact; for there were such in reality, and the apostle now brings to mind an actual unbeliever." See § 59, 1.—A. H.]

11. And this is the record (*testimony, witness*). The contents, purport, of the testimony of God, through the water, the blood, and the Spirit. **That** (*namely, that*) **God hath given** (literally, *gave*) **to us eternal life.** The water, pointing to the water of life, the blood signifying the vital principle, the Spirit, who was the very element of life itself, all said, and continue to say, that God gave to us, who believe and when we believed, the true, the eternal, life. "This eternal life is not directly the state of future blessedness, described as already given because it is certain, but the spiritual life in the soul commenced already on earth, and destined to survive the death of the body and be eternal. True believers enter upon the eternal life in this world." (Hackett.) For fuller definition of eternal life, see note on 2: 25. Observe that this life is something '*given*'; in the fullest sense *a grace.* We do not earn it, or deserve it; we only receive it, a pure gift. **And this life is** (abidingly) **in his Son.** We must regard this statement as a part of

12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.
13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.
14 And this is the confidence that we have in him,

12 He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.
13 These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that
14 believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we

the unfolding or purport of the testimony (μαρτυρία), and co-ordinate in construction with the latter part of the immediately preceding sentence. The water, the blood, and the Spirit declared not only the gift of life, but also that he who came by way of them (ver. 6) had it absolutely and fully in himself. Christ is the eternal vessel of the living water. It is all in him. It is not in angels, or in systems, but in the Son. Only in and through him is life communicated to a lost world. (4: 9; John 10: 10.)

12. If eternal life is conveyed to the world as a deposit in Christ, then the double statement of this verse is the most obvious inference. If Christ and the life are inseparable, we cannot have one without the other. **He that hath the Son hath** (*the*) **life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not** (*the*) **life.** The Revised Version properly translates the article before 'life': 'Hath not the life.' And yet he has natural life, proving wholly another sort of life to be meant by John. It is only as we touch Christ that we live. Our regeneration is in connection with Christ. (Eph. 2: 10.) To live is Christ (Gal. 2: 20 Phil. 1: 21); and Christ is our life (Col. 3: 4); and we have life more abundantly as we have more of Christ. He who rejects Christ, of necessity cuts himself off from the true life.

13-17. SPIRITUAL CONFIDENCE AND EFFECTUAL PRAYING THE MARK AND PRIVILEGE OF NEW LIFE.

13. These things. Those especially in the preceding section, relating to the fontal life and divine Sonship of Christ, which are wonderfully adapted to deepen the faith and increase the confidence of Christians. **Have I written**—literally, *I wrote.* Aorist. Imagine a pause, or interruption, between the preceding section and the present one, and the tense becomes natural. **Unto you.** The Christian circle, for which John wrote. **That believe on the name of the Son of God.** These words, given in the Common Version, are omitted in the Revised and Bible Union Versions, as they do not belong to the pure text. **That** (ἵνα) **ye may know** (the certainty of the fact) **that ye have** (as a present abiding possession) **eternal life.** What the apostle had just written concerning this life, and its testimony through the water, the blood, and the Spirit, was calculated to deepen and certify this very knowledge. It is the privilege of Christians to 'know' that they have eternal life—are converted, and saved. With many the consciousness is as assured as that of existence itself. Our Epistle attaches much importance to such knowledge. Our present verse indicates a way to this full assurance. We get into life by believing in Christ; but we know that we are in this life by enlarging our view of Christ as the great and only Fountain of our life. To the true Christian the fuller view of the doctrine of life is a means of knowing that he has the life. **And that ye may believe**—literally, *even to you that believe.* Defining 'to you' in the early part of the verse, and showing that believers are the persons whose privilege the writer is setting forth. Awkward as this delayed insertion of the defining clause may seem, nevertheless the critical text compels its approval in place of the 'and that ye may believe' of the Common Version. **On** (*into*, εἰς; see on ver. 10) **the name of the Son of God**—that is, believing Christ, as he is revealed under the name of 'the Son of God.' See John 20: 31.

14. And this is the confidence (or *boldness*). Springing from the sense of union with Christ the life, and from the certain knowledge that we have eternal life. This *boldness*, or 'confidence,' is the same in nature with the boldness spoken of in 2: 28; 3: 21; 4: 17. See Notes. **That we have in** (*towards*) **him.** Towards God, as in 3: 21, where also holy boldness before God and effectual praying are connected, as indeed in Heb. 4: 16. In the full consciousness of spiritual life (ver. 13) there is no feeling of shame or condemnation, and hence the fullest freedom in God's presence. And in that felt freedom there is ready asking. Besides, in this complete spiritual life, God and his will are much in the soul, so that our will in what we ask is

that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:
15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.
16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for

ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
15 and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have
16 asked of him. If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, [1] he shall ask, and *God* will give

1 Or, *he shall ask and shall* give him life, even *to them, &c.*

likely to be his will. **That, if we ask anything** (temporal or spiritual, for ourselves or for others) **according to his will** (adjunct of the *asking*, as the Greek shows), **he heareth us.** 'Us' in the genitive suggests that the hearing is with sympathy, and is affected with a moving influence from the Christian or his cause. But what is the relation of this dependent sentence to the boldness before God, just spoken of? The answer may be given by the following paraphrase: "And this is the kind of boldness, the degree of boldness, which, in the full realization of eternal life, we have before God, that if we ask anything," etc. It is that kind of boldness that is accompanied with effectual praying, and is proved by it. It is not exactly confidence that we shall be heard, but a free boldnesss of such a kind that it meets acceptance before God, and makes this acceptance a thing to be expected. Compare once more 3:21; Heb. 4:16. When one is full of spiritual life and filial boldness, his will in praying is likely to be according to God's will, so that his praying is as welcome as his person. When one prays in full union with Christ, it is also Christ praying; it is praying in his name, and the prayer is accepted. (John 15:7, 16.) It is the very will of God. So when the Spirit prays in us, it is the will of God. Evidently a great spiritual life is at the foundation of efficacious prayer. James 5:16 involves the same principle. "To repeat a holy name may be an easy thing; but to attain that holy abiding, in which there is such a perfect community of life with our true vine, that it is as impossible for us to ask amiss as for the branch of the fig-tree to put forth the buds and flower of the thorn, this is to reach the very ideal of discipleship." (A. J. Gordon, D. D.)

15. And if we know (as we do, so asking) **that he hear** (*heareth*) **us** (as to) **whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions** (things prayed for) **that we desired of him** (or *have asked from him*). If God gives us favoring audience, he goes further, and gives us our requests. As certain as it is that he hears, so certain is it that he bestows. And note the tenses. We now have what we have asked for. "The perfect reaches through all our past prayers to this moment. All these we have; not one of them is lost. He has heard, he has answered them all. We know that we have them in the truest sense, in possession." (Alford.) The prophetic word of Isa. 65:24 (compare Dan. 9:21) is fulfilled.

16. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death. The 'any man' is a praying person, a Christian. The 'brother,' according to the analogy of our Epistle, is a brother in the kinship of the new birth. In the case supposed, the intercessor must 'see,' be personally cognizant, of the brother's offense, so as to know its true nature; it is not enough to learn of it through others. And he must see the brother actually *sinning* (present participle) the sin, or in the guilt of it (for one still does a sin till he repents of it). And the sin must not be unto death! it must not be the sin to which death is remedilessly affixed, which hath never forgiveness. What this sin is will be noticed farther on. Having spoken of the efficacy of Christian prayer in general, as the proper fruit of the life of God in us, the apostle proceeds to speak of the efficacy in a particular direction—namely, when it takes the form of intercession in behalf of other brethren, others particularly who have lapsed into sin. Here is a priestly office of the Christian, analogous to that of Christ in the Gospel of John, chapter 17. Paul testifies how much he himself bore this fruit of intercession, and be besought the intercession of the churches for himself. Jonathan Edwards begged such help, even from brethren far away. The extraordinary religious interest in Scotland, in 1840, seems to have been begun and sustained largely by mutually intercessory praying among the laborers. **He shall ask.** He is bound to do it, and he will

them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.
17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

him life for them that sin not unto death. There is [1] a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that
17 he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is [1] a sin not unto death.

1 Or, *sin*.

do it. In this asking (*αἰτέω*, not *ἐρωτάω*), as in ver. 14, 15, there is the meaning of beseeching, the most earnest entreaty, as of one who feels his utter dependence. **And he shall give him life.** The intercessor, receiving divine answer, does this—this marvelous thing—does it for the sinning brother. By his intercession he brings to the sinning one the grace of repentance and confession, the blessing of pardon, and the fresh restored manifestation of the Holy Spirit of life. The intercessor is said to give all this, because his petition has caused the blessing to come. The praying man is actually a beneficent force to his erring brother; under God, a fountain of good to him. (That is) **for them that sin not** (*μή*, subjective, implies a judgment of the intercessor in the matter) **unto death.** Repeats, for sake of preventing mistake, the definition of the party or parties for whom the intercessor's office is effectual, to whom the fresh life may be given. The limit is evidently an important one in John's view. That sin unto death frowns down upon him, denying all hope, and he must except it again and again. **There is a sin unto death.** There is, then, this exception to effectual praying. An important exception, as the repeated notice of the matter shows. What is this sin which results in certain and hopeless death? which is absolutely unto death? It is a sin that John has terribly marked again and again in our Epistle, that of willfully rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit as to the true nature and Messiahship of Jesus, the denying of Christ in his true nature. That it is a sin which connects itself with one's treatment of Christ is a fair inference from the doctrine of ver. 12. That it was the particular sin we have pointed out would naturally be suggested to the minds of the readers of the whole Epistle. The unpardonable sin of Matt. 12: 32; Mark 3: 29, 30; Heb. 6: 4, 6; 10: 29, is of the same tenor and character essentially; the doing of despite to the light of the Spirit as to Christ. Finally, if to confess Christ with mouth and heart is salvation unto life (Rom. 10: 10), so denial of Christ with mouth and heart, as the antichrists did, must be the sin that is unto remediless death. It denies, and so far as it can do, annihilates the only means of life, and therefore *must* be unto death. And to pray for its remission is to pray for an impossibility: it is to pray against an absolute decree. (Mark 3: 29.) It is to pray for a salvation outside of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In fact, there can be no spirit of prayer in that behalf. [It is noteworthy that John here uses the weaker word, "to ask" (*ἐρωτάω*), and not the stronger, "to beseech" "claim" (*αἰτέω*): "I do not say that he should ask" (much less, entreat) "concerning that sin." See Huther on the passage. The Revised Version translates very exactly, following the order of the original text: *Not concerning this do I say that he should make request.*—A. H.] The 'death,' of course, would be understood as the state that is destitute of the new life, which John has so fully marked in the context.

17. All (or, *every*) **unrighteousness is sin.** The apostle is speaking of definite acts, noticeable by the intercessor, and pardonable or unpardonable. Because an offense in not unto death and the person committing it may be prayed for with hope of life, it must not therefore be concluded that it is not properly a sin, violating God's law, and offensive to holy nature. (3: 4.) It is a *sin*, though it may be called only *un*righteousness, and therefore needs forgiveness. It is a sin, a grievous sin, whether committed by believer or unbeliever. **And there is a sin not** (*οὐ*, marking an objective fact, not dependent on any one's judgment) **unto death.** Though it be a sin, a violation of God's holy law, yet it may be one that God can forgive, because it does not do utter despite to the Spirit of Grace, does not deny the very nature of Christ.

18–21. THE SINLESS NATURE, THE HIGH RELATION, THE SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE, AND THE DIVINE UNION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. THE STANDING OF SUCH A PEOPLE IS INCONSISTENT WITH EVERY KIND OF IDOLATRY.

In this closing portion of his Epistle, the

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

18 We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth
19 [1] himself, and the evil one toucheth him not. We

1 Some ancient manuscripts read *him*.

apostle briefly resumes or summarizes the chief facts belonging to the new life. The great matter to which he would conduct his readers in all this deep writing is the realization of their union with God in Christ, and the holiness it involves. It is fitting, therefore, that some of the last words of his letter of love and righteousness should touch this cardinal truth of the Christian position.

18. We know (as a fact) **that whosoever is born** (or, *begotten*) **of** (ἐκ, *out of*) **God sinneth not.** Does not sin as the law, tendency, ideal, of his regenerate nature. He belongs to the sphere of light. Sinning is not the on-going and ultimate of his nature; but something temporary, to be dropped away in the fulfilling of the new nature. The characterizing, fulfilling, conquering, nature of the Christian is holy as God is holy. For further explanation of this case, see especially notes on 3: 6, 9. The doctrine is inserted again here, not only as a chief and concluding point in the Johannean faith, but to save his readers from inferring that because a brother sins (ver. 16), and needs brotherly intercession, he therefore is under a law and continuous tendency to sin, or his new and ultimate nature is otherwise than perfectly holy and utterly apart from Satan. It is a notable illustration of the complemental and mutually balancing relation of parts of Scripture, to be remembered by interpreter, student, and teacher. **But he that is** (*was*) **begotten of God keepeth himself.** The Revised Version gives not 'himself' but "him" as the critical text requires. And as far as the structure of the sentence is concerned, the most natural reference of 'him' is to God; and the thought is, that the regenerate man keeps God—that is, preserves him in vital union with himself. The new nature holds God in itself, and, beginning in union with him, abides one with him. Here is the true secret and reason of the "perseverance of the saints"; and the assertion of the fact is beyond gainsaying. Alford makes 'him' refer to the man who is begotten again, and, in order to this, construes the first part of the sentence as one of those not unusual cases in which the words do not follow each other in a strictly grammatical order. He forcibly inserts the word *it* (the divine birth pointed at in the preceding verbal expression) before the word "keepeth." [So remarkable is the thought found in this clause by the author that a few words may properly be added. We are sometimes said to apprehend (or lay hold of) God spiritually, and there seems to be as good reason for saying that we retain him in the grasp of our spiritual affection. So Jacob said to the angel of God who wrestled with him, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Gen. 32: 26.) In so far as manuscripts and early versions are concerned, the weight of evidence (owing especially to the authority of A′ B) is in favor of "*him*," rather than 'himself.' Besides, if the original text was 'himself,' we cannot account for the change to "him"—a far more difficult reading—while a change from the latter to the former would be very likely to occur. Scrivener appears to favor the reading "him" (which is given by Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and the Revised Version), but assumes that if "him" is the true reading, "he that was begotten of God" "can be none other than the Only-begotten Son who keepeth the sons of God, agreeably to his own declaration in John 17: 12." Yet he admits that "we have no other example in Scripture or ecclesiastical writers of 'he that was begotten' (ὁ γεωηθεις) being used absolutely for the Divine Son, though the contrast here suggested is somewhat countenanced by that between 'he that sanctifieth' and 'they that are sanctified' in Heb. 2: 11." He might have referred to the Nicene Creed as using almost exactly the form of expression found here—namely, "he that was begotten of the Father" (τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα) instead of "he that was begotten of God (ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ).—A. H.] **And that** (literally, *the*) **wicked one** (Satan, 2: 13; 3: 12; Matt. 13: 19; Luke 8: 12; Eph. 6: 16) **toucheth him not.** 'Him' may refer to God, with the meaning that if Satan does not touch God, he does not touch him who receives God's nature in the new birth; or, it may refer directly to the child of the new birth, who

19 *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.
20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

19 know that we are of God, and the whole world
20 lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is

keeps God. Satan, who is the evil one *par eminence*, may tempt and beset and disturb the Christian, but he cannot hurt or even touch him in his vital part. He has no power over the new nature. (John 14: 30.) [The latter view is better than the former, and is somewhat against the reference of 'him' in the preceding clause to God.—A. H.]

19. And is to be omitted. **We know that we are of God.** Born of him, and hence bearing his spiritual nature. A matter of certain and blessed knowledge through previous teaching (4: 4, 6), and through the witnessing Spirit. (Rom. 8: 16.) "Never rest till you can say this," said McCheyne. In this verse the apostle applies to himself and his readers the general truth asserted in the foregoing verse, and sharply contrasts their standing with that of the unregenerate world, so that there is evident progress in the thought, and growth in the strength of it. **And the whole world** (in its natural unregenerate state) **lieth in wickedness** (rather, *the wicked one*). Not merely is touched by the wicked one (ver. 18), but even 'lieth in' the wicked one, in entire union with him; willingly, unresistingly given up to him, completely within his sphere. That the wicked one here is not an abstract principle of evil, but a very person, is indicated by the contrasted personal God, by the unmistakable termination of the nominative form in the preceding verse, by the analogy of John's diction, and by the references adduced under ver. 18.

20. And—(δέ; here as a concluding, summing up, particle, as in 1 Thess. 5: 23; 2 Thess. 3: 16; Heb. 13: 20) **we know.** The same 'we know' (οἴδαμεν), beginning each of verses 18, 19, 20, gives them "almost the appearance of a confession or summary of faith." (Hackett.) Alford calls them "three solemn maxims." **That the Son of God is come.** Into the world, in the flesh; literally so. Our Epistle has again and again emphasized this cardinal matter, especially against the perversion of the antichrists; and it was a comforting, satisfying fact, at the very basis of atonement and redemption, and the consternation of him (ver. 19) who held the world in his wickedness. **And hath given us an understanding.** This 'understanding' (διάνοια) is "the divinely empowered inner sense," or spiritual faculty, which is given us by Christ, in the effectual action of his Spirit on our minds, making us capable of spiritual knowledge, and in order to (ἵνα) it, as the following clause shows. For the same doctrine, see Eph. 1: 18. The natural man needs this spiritual action upon his understanding that he may know spiritual things. And Christ has come, and has given the Spirit for this creative work. **That** (ἵνα) **we may know** or, as in Revised Version "we know" (the indicative; declaring the object of the understanding and the fact that we already have the object, in one statement) **him that is true** (or *the True One*). The 'True One' is God (John 17: 3), as the pronoun in the expression 'his Son,' that follows, demonstrates. And he is called the True One (ἀληθινον, and not ἀληθῆ), the real, genuine, God, to assert his distinction from all fictitious or false gods having the world's heart, whether the devil (god of this world) or images. It is, then, one privilege of the gospel to know God; to know him, not merely by the reason or conscience, not merely through theological propositions, but with the knowledge of personal experience, as one knows the odor of flowers, the sweetness of music, or the refreshment of the morning dew, attaining that sensible satisfying appreciation of God, marked in words of Eliphaz, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." (Job 22: 21.) **And we are in him that is true** (*the True One*). In union with him; and thus distinguished from those who are in union with the false and 'wicked one.' We not only know God in spiritual experience, but we are in him, in the life element of God the Spirit, in a union of nature with him. **In his Son Jesus Christ.** Yes, in his Son, Jesus Christ. Not even a copulative separates this clause from the preceding

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

21 the true God, and eternal life. *My* little children, guard yourselves from idols.

one, as if it were so involved in it as to be very nearly a restatement in another form. To be in union with the True One is also to be in union with his Son. The two facts cannot be separated. In fact, we come into union with the Father through union with the Son. (John 14: 6, 20: 17: 23.) This same spiritual union with the Father and the Son stood before the mind at the opening of the Epistle; appropriately it comes out sublimely to view at the close. For it is the ultimatum and glory of the Christian life. In it the river has flowed out into the ocean; the heart is swallowed up in the divine light and love. The new life is filled out when it comes to conscious union with the Father and the Son. **This is the true God, and eternal life.** To whom does the word 'this' refer; to the remote True One, or to his Son, Jesus Christ? With the ancient interpreters, and against many of the modern ones, we must decide for the latter reference. Because, 1. Christ the Son is the nearer and more obvious antecedent, apart from all theologizing. 2. The connection calls for it. John had, in effect, said that to be in the Father was to be in the Son. "How so?" the mind queries. Because Christ himself is the true God, not less than the Father. 3. It does not advance the thought, and seems like a tautology, or repetition, after the Father has been twice designated as the True One, to say, This (true one) is the true God. What object is gained by saying so? 4. Christ is not only the immediate antecedent, but, whatever may be said to the contrary, he is the principal subject of the preceding part of the verse. One has but to read it carefully from the beginning to be convinced of this. 5. Life eternal is the predicate, not of the Father, but of the Son; and especially in the writing of John. See 1: 1, 2; 5: 11, 12, 13. It is the Scripture thought, that the Father hath life, but that the Son is life. To call Christ the life eternal is to unite the closing of the Epistle with its beginning. 6. To call Christ, the Son, the true God harmonizes with statements in both the Gospel and Revelation of John. We may add, that Ebrard, Braune, Schultze, Weiss, Thomasius, and others definitely maintain the view here unfolded.

21. Little children. John takes leave of his readers, and gives them his parting precept, with tender loving address; with a title that reminded them of their relation at once to God and to him, inspired them with Christian confidence, and laid the basis for strong admonition and appeal. **Keep** (*guard*, as in a garrison) **yourselves from** (*the*) **idols.** 'The idols' worshiped by the world round about you, whether spiritual or material in their nature. Separate, guard, yourselves from all the spirit and form of idolatry. The allegiance of your worship and love is due to him who is the True God and Life Eternal, and not to be turned or divided to any object or system of human creation or finiteness. Christ and idolatry are mutually exclusive alternatives in the hearts of men.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

I. AUTHOR.

Who wrote these Epistles? No one doubts that they were written by one and the same person. Their form, style, thought, and spirit suggest one author. They have been called twin sisters. But who was the writer? The answers have been somewhat various. Of these, only two are worthy of note: one, that the writer was the person who wrote the First Epistle—namely, John, the apostle; the other, that the writer was John, the presbyter, a Christian disciple, who, it is alleged, lived in Ephesus near the close of the first century. Ebrard sustains the latter opinion; but the weight of critical judgment is for the other view, which is strongly sanctioned by Lücke, De Wette, Huther, Düsterdieck, Lange, Alford, and many others of scarcely less scholarship and acumen.

If in some of the early documents and testimonies these two Epistles are omitted, where the First is cited or named, the reason is to be found in their exceeding brevity, and their merely private destination, rather than in a doubt of their apostolic origin. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius and Alexander of Alexandria, Cyprian, and Eusebius, all give direct or indirect testimony to the authorship by John, the apostle. Even the existence of such a person as John, the presbyter, as distinguished from the Apostle John, is deemed by Alford "very doubtful." The principal reason why the two Epistles have been attributed to any other than John, the apostle, is the writer's announcement of himself in each as the elder, or presbyter. It is the manner of John, as the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle show, to suppress his own name as far as possible. But, writing a personal letter to a personal acquaintance, it was necessary for him to designate himself in some way, which he does, as would be natural to him, with the most modest epithet which he could use, that would be sufficient to identify him. What other term could be so well selected, as that of the elder, or presbyter, to accomplish this, and at the same time satisfy the apostle's modest spirit? For he was an elder, or bishop, in one class with others at Ephesus; and he was *the* elder in being the first among equals in his official relation to the church in Ephesus. And this, therefore, (ὁ πρεβύτερος, official, not ὁ πρεσβύτης, an old man) would unmistakably designate him. Did not Peter, though an apostle, call himself an elder? (1 Peter 5: 1.) Papias included apostles among those called elders. Another John at Ephesus could not be called *the* elder by way of eminence. The epithet makes for, rather than against, the apostle. The internal evidence of these Epistles, furnished by the style, sentiment, and manner, is strikingly in favor of the authorship of John, the apostle. It is not necessary to make the comparisons illustrating this point.

II. PERSONS ADDRESSED.

To whom were these Epistles written? It is admitted by all that the Third was addressed to a Christian brother bearing the name of Gaius, a brother of prominence, active in behalf of missionaries, benevolent and beloved, but whether the Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19 : 29), or the Gaius of Corinth (1 Cor. 1 : 14; Rom. 16 : 23), or the Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20 : 4), or neither of them, none can decide. One of this name is mentioned in "The Apostolic Constitution" as Bishop of Pergamos, and some have thought him to be the one addressed by John, but only on the basis of the purest conjecture.

It seems equally plain to us that the Second Epistle was addressed to a prominent and influential Christian sister, Cyria by name, and to her children. Is not this exactly what the letter says, as explicitly as the utterance of the address in the other letter? Yet there have been those, who, fond of remote meanings and fanciful inventions, have understood this Epistle to be addressed to a church, or to all the churches together, under the name and figure of a chosen lady. Some holding Cyria (κυρία) to be an epithet (lady, or mistress), with indeed a literal and not a figurative application, have made all sorts of conjectures as to who the lady was; it even being guessed that she was Martha of Bethany, or again, Mary the mother of Jesus! Those maintaining the figurative application of the term, have even gone so far as to conjecture the particular church addressed. That at Corinth has been named; also that at Philadelphia, and that at Jerusalem. We think we have given the most obvious distinction of the Epistle, and one with which its tenor, and natural interpretation, and the analogy of its twin companion, are most in harmony. Why we regard the term *Cyria* as a name, and not an epithet, and the term *elect* as an epithet, and not a name, will further appear in the commentary.

III. PLACE AND TIME.

The place and time of writing these Epistles need not be discussed at any length. From a passage in the "History" of Eusebius (III. 23), it is inferred that they were written late in the apostle's long life, and their notable similarity suggests that they were written not far apart in matter of time. The journey spoken of in each may have been one and the same. From the suggestions connected with the First Epistle, and from the generally credited tradition respecting John's residence in the last part of his life, there can be little doubt that the place of writing was Ephesus.

The object and contents of these Epistles, together with other peculiarities belonging to them, may be best learned in our exegetical study of them. We only add that the Third Epistle may be fairly designated as pre-eminently the Missionary Epistle of the New Testament. As to missionary enterprise, and our duty to it, it supplies in little space a surprising measure of instruction.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

1 The elder unto the elect [1] lady and her children,

1 Or, *Cyria*.

1–3. Destination and General Purpose of the Epistle, with a Loving Salutation Within the Sphere of Gospel Truth.

1. The elder. John, the apostle, and writer of the previous Epistle. The existence of a presbyter John, other than the apostle of that name, and living in his time, or a little later, is, perhaps, doubtful; and the attributing of the present writing to him seems as improbable as it is unnecessary. The style, the words, the thoughts, the warnings, are those of him who wrote the First Epistle. The peculiar personal life represented in the one letter is manifest in the other. Every appreciative reader of the New Testament feels the Johannean manner and heart in our Epistle. And then the external and historical evidence on the whole decides for the authorship of the Apostle John. Nor is it foreign to John's way to omit his own name, and identify himself only by some indirect description. No early gospel writer of whom we have any knowledge, would be so likely as John to begin an epistle by leaving out his own name, and calling himself simply the elder, as is done in the present writing. He who called himself indirectly the disciple whom Jesus loved, who withheld his own name in record of the two in John 1: 40 (Godet), who, in his First Epistle, only remotely suggests himself, is just the one to do as the writer of our Epistle has done. The designation "elder," may refer to the writer's general office as one of the elders of the church, or to his matured, and advanced age. The Apostle Peter reckoned himself officially in the class of elders (1 Peter 5: 1); and John may have done the same, assuming the humbler of two rightful titles. In that case, however, he would be more likely to speak of himself as an elder, than as the elder. The latter expression would be more in place if he were to call himself merely the old man. In gospel experience, and in years, he was doubtless the oldest living teacher in the churches at the time when he wrote. How touching and unassuming is the designation, with this reference! The aged servant of Christ, the father in the gospel, writes to a favorite Christian family some words of affection and timely admonition. **Unto the elect lady** (or, *Cyria*). This translation is preferred to that in the Common Version. (Bengel, DeWette, Lücke, Ebrard.) Instances of the ancient use of the original word for Cyria (*κυρία*) as a proper name, are given by Gruter and Lücke. There are indications that the third letter of John and our letter were written about the same time. If the third was written to an individual by name (Gaius), is not the second likely to be? It is more common for the New Testament writers to mention the person addressed by simple name, than by any descriptive title. To make the translation 'lady,' and then to interpret 'lady' as the church, is a mysticism foreign to sacred epistolary writings. It comes, therefore, to this: that if we have New Testament epistles addressed to brethren, as Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Gaius, we have likewise one directed to a sister, also by name; and the reasonable prominence of woman in the early church is exemplified. That the term 'elect' is an adjective, and not a proper name (Electa), is suggested by its position without the article in the Greek, as well as by its application also to a sister (ver. 13) of the person addressed. And with what meaning is the term applied to Cyria? To signify her standing in the sovereign grace and eternal choice of God, and her consequent distinction as one delighted in by all within the sphere of gospel truth. In the early Church there was less hesitancy in calling Christians the elect than prevails at present. The old habit might be resumed with profit. God's eternal plan in salvation, and the strength of our standing as

2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.
3 Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the

whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all 2 they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which 3 abideth in us, and it shall be with us forever: Grace,

saints, might then be more fully recognized. **Whom** (that is, both Cyria and her children), **I** (emphatic) **love in truth.** Truth here, and generally in the writing of John, is the truth of Christ considered as exactly conforming to, and representing God's nature. It is the system of the gospel filled with the life of God, and capable of becoming an experience of the heart. Loving in truth, in John's meaning, is loving in the element and sphere of truth so defined. It is loving in truth as a living experience, connecting and bounding both the subject and object of the love. The truth is the bond of sympathy. A love so conditioned was spiritual and holy. A common life of the divine gospel was its ground and reason. Here is the foundation of all abiding Christian affection—not sentiment, not impulse, not worldly beauty, which is evanescent, but the truth of Christ in the soul. **That have known the truth**—have become experimentally acquainted with it; have known it in the heart. Only so can one really know the truth. Then truth and the soul are in vital union. The statement of John is that not only he, but all others who are in sympathy with the truth, and have met Cyria and her children, love them because they discern in them the same truth they themselves have felt, and thus instantly there is a bond of union and affection. It is equivalent to loving in the Lord. Of course, 'all they' must be limited to those who knew the person to whom he was writing.

2. For the truth's sake (or, *on account of the truth*)—that is, to serve and promote it. The truth is the object. What is it that is for this object? Possibly John views his love for this mother and her children as serving the interests of the truth in him and them, and before the eyes of all. Christian love makes room for truth, demonstrates it, and commends it. That which is its basis and principle it also serves as its end. But it is more probable that John has in mind his present writing as that which is for this object. He writes to Cyria and her children with this object before him, that he may serve the truth in them and in all the kingdom of Christ, by recalling precious commands, by warning against deceivers and errorists, and by encouraging them to abide in the doctrine of Christ. What a worthy motive for writing—'for the truth's sake!' What would he not do that this sublime end might be served! How precious was the truth of the gospel to John! He had given himself to it, and now it was his continual study how he might guard and exalt it. **Which dwelleth** (or, *abideth*, ver. 9) **in us.** In John, in the woman and her family, and in all the company of believers. When the truth of Christ comes into union with a soul, it is not for a temporary visit, but to abide there. That soul is its home. And because it is in such abiding relations with the very life of those who welcome it, therefore it was worthy of service, and should have sacred guard. **And shall be with us** (not with unbelievers or the errorists) **for ever**—through this life, and on through the eternal ages, without interruption, without cessation. The truth energized, made alive, in us by the Holy Spirit, abides. It touches the soul as an eternal principle. Christianity experienced in reality continues. But those who have no root wither away. In this verse there seems to be, as Alford has suggested, a reminiscence of forms of expression used in John 14: 16, 17.

3. With you. Not with *you*, though according to text of Lachmann, but with 'us,' as understood by nearly all critics. In the midst (μετά) of us, in our company, along with us, in all times and circumstances. With us, specially John, Cyria, and the children, though not excluding others who know the truth. The blessing is not merely wished, nor is it alone willed, with a certain causativity, as appears in Paul's salutations, but its certain fulfillment is declared; not indeed excluding the wish or the will on John's part, but looking on at once to the sure effect, which has no contingency whatsoever. **Grace**—the favor, benevolence, love of God, considered as in exercise, and actually out-going. "The universal source of all our salvation and new life." (Ebrard.) Trench, in his "Synonyms of the New Testament," too much limits its reference. **Mercy**—the particular exercise of the grace of God towards

Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.
4 I rejoice greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the son of the Father, in truth and love.
4 I rejoice greatly that I have found *certain* of thy children walking in truth, even as we received com-

the guilty and miserable, resulting in their salvation. It is a sweet word to such as feel their sins, and realize what they may involve. **Peace**—the full effect of grace and mercy in the soul. It includes the pacification of conscience, the assuagement of fear, the annulling of enmity toward God, and substantial spiritual health and rest. **From God the Father.** The Father, specially in his relation to Christ; yet our Father by our becoming one with Christ. The term 'from' (παρά) here is other than that (ἀπό) uniformly employed by Paul in similar formulas. Meaning *from the presence of*, it dilates the point whence the blessing proceeds, and somewhat detains the imagination upon it. It implies a certain emphasis of the origin of the grace. **And from the Lord** (*the Lord* not genuine) **Jesus Christ.** The preposition (unlike the usage in Paul's salutations) is here repeated to render Christ's personal distinction from the Father more marked, and at the same time to make his complete equality with him, as a source of blessing, more prominent. The term 'Jesus' is meant to express fully the humanity of Jesus. And the whole expression is shaped with reference to current heresies (see ver. 7, 9, 10) as to the person of Christ. **The Son of the Father.** Doctrinal and defensive in relation to gainsayers and seducers. **In truth and love.** The two ground tones of the Epistle, says Alford. The two things to be recalled and impressed in what follows. And they are the sphere and element, the measure and end, of the grace, mercy, and peace declared. The blessing declared shall come into consciousness united with truth and love, and putting honor upon them. The living knowledge of the truth, and the action of love, accompany the blessing. The blessing is of that kind that it cannot be without them. John can announce no blessing which is out of connection with Christ and his system, or which is alien to love. The two terms concentrate into themselves the substance of the fourth chapter in the First Epistle, and impress one that the author of that chapter is the writer here.

4–8. Joy, Exhortation, and Admonition, as to Walking in the Truth of Christ and the Grace of Love.

4. I rejoiced greatly. He had become acquainted with the Christian character of at least a portion of Cyria's children, in some way. Perhaps it was through the reliable report of others; perhaps it was by one or more personal meetings, which could well have happened on some journey, or, still more probably, at the home of their aunt (ver. 13), with whom John was in some near relation. Very likely his acquaintance with the spiritual standing of the children had arisen in both ways. That there had been more than one occasion of learning about the children seems to be implied by the use of the perfect tense which follows. But whenever and as often as he had found out their good walk he rejoiced even exceedingly. The old man was capable of a very lively emotion. **That I have found** introduces the matter of the great joy. The tense seems to imply a repeated discovery of evidence. **Of thy children**—that is, such of them as he had met, or had learned about in any other way. Of the others of the children he says nothing here, certainly nothing against them. Ver. 1 implies well of them all. **Walking in truth.** Holding to the truth of the gospel, and living according to it. The truth manifested itself in their heart experience, and in their general conduct. The truth was the element, motive power, and mould of their life. It includes union with Christ and the Holy Spirit, for these belong to the truth system considered as a living display of the divine nature. So walking, the truth was their theme and confession; it ennobled their looks, it tempered their words, it inspired their zeal; and others might take knowledge of them that they were possessed by it. Their continual testimony, their Christian obedience, their relish of gospel occupations and gospel company, showed to all where they stood. When we witness this, or hear of this, in God's professed children, we cannot help rejoicing, as the apostle did in case of Cyria's faithful children. If

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

5 mandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, [1]lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the 6 beginning, that we love one another. And this is

1 Or, *Cyria.*

we are in sympathy with the truth, there are two things that give us peculiar joy: To hear of the conversion of sinners, and to know that those converted are walking, as Christians should, in fidelity to the doctrines and principles of the new life they have received. How a pastor rejoices over the well-doing members of his flock! He knows how John felt. Paul was wont to rejoice much over the persevering Christian faith and walk of members of the various churches. Words expressive of his peculiar satisfaction in this regard are addressed to some at Rome, at Corinth, at Philippi, and at Colosse. Nor is it hard to understand why John and Paul should be so glad over the truth-like walk of those who had professed Christ. In case of Cyria's children, John rejoiced for their sake, for his own sake, for the mother's sake, and, above all, for the sake of Christ and the gospel. And what an opposite feeling of mourning fills our hearts when we find those whom we have known and loved in the gospel failing to walk in the truth as they set out to do. Be sure of this, O Christian professor, that your Christian walk is giving somebody pain or joy. Others are so interested in you, or connected with you, that it cannot be otherwise. **As** (*even as*) **we have received a commandment from the Father.** 'Have' is to be omitted before 'received.' The Father of Christ is meant, and our Father by Christ. The preposition 'from' is the same as in ver. 3; see note there. At what definite past time was the commandment received? No certain answer can be given. Perhaps the time of John's associating with Christ on earth is referred to, and the commandment, of which John has a reminiscence (see also 1 John 2: 7), but no record, is one that came from the Father through the Son. What was the commandment? The connection implies that it was one relating to walking in the truth. Jesus may at some time have given a charge about such walking, in the hearing of John and his fellow disciples, which the gospels have not mentioned. As we have received the Lord Jesus, so we must walk in him. Being a Christian is not only to begin, but to continue in gospel doctrine and life. Nor is it to have something hid in the heart, about which others cannot know anything, but it is to let one's light shine so that others may see and glorify the Father in heaven. The walking is something recognizable. The command to walk in the truth is therefore virtually, first a charge to continue in the Christian way, and second, to give evidence of our new life to others. And so shall joy be awakened around.

5. And now (having made the preliminary statements which the writer wished to make) **I beseech** (or *ask*, not as a beggar, αἰτέω, but as one who has a right to ask, ἐρωτάω) **thee, lady** (*Cyria*), **not as though I wrote** (or *as writing*, for the best text requires the participle) **a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning** (that is, at first, when Christ was on earth, John 15: 12), **that we** (John puts himself under one law with all Christians) **love one another.** This is the *aim* of John's asking, or entreaty, *that* (ἵνα) we love one another. So Christ's command will be fulfilled. He asks Cyria to do her part in this fulfillment. For the fine purport of this command, the sense in which it is new and the sense in which it is not new, and a defense of its exclusive application to the family of Christ, see notes on 1 John 2: 7, 8; 3: 23; 4: 7. The relation of our verse to the preceding suggests the relation of brotherly love to walking in truth. Thy children walk in truth: And now I beseech thee that we love one another. Truth is the divine principle of Christianity received in union with God. Brotherly love is the outflow, fruit, fulfillment, of that living principle. Having been grafted into God's nature in the new birth, and so receiving the very truth of God, we must love as God loves, and so love all God's children with a peculiar fondness. The truth life is logically prior to love of the brethren, but involves it as its crown and completion. It was this intimate union of the two that led John, having spoken of a walk in the truth, to follow at once with a reminder concerning love. Living truth and

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.
7 For many deceivers are entered into the world,

love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the
7 beginning, that ye should walk in it. For many

Christian love imply each other in every renewed soul. There is an instructive hint in John's use of that word 'beseech,' or *ask*. He does not command. God commands; it is our office to entreat and beseech. (2 Cor. 5: 20.) We may not dictate or drive; it is ours to do simply the earnest and subdued work of beseeching. Oh, for the tenderness of John and the tears of Paul in addressing our dying fellow men! Our verse does not declare to Cyria a new duty or doctrine. It is only a reminder of what had been spoken of to her, doubtless, over and over again. Probably scores of times she had heard about it in meetings where she had been present. Of the leading things in our religion we need frequent reminding, and may not shrink from the repetition of important teachings.

6. And this is love. 'This' is the predicate. The love principle is this. That is, this is its action, the direction it takes, its working. See 1 John 5: 3, and compare John 14: 15, 21, 23. **That we walk after his** (the Father's; compare ver. 4) **commandments.** The commands of the gospel made through Christ and the apostles are those here in mind. They relate to the whole circle of Christian obligation and obedience. They imply indeed all the moral law of whatsoever age. They include belief, confession, baptism, and observance of the Lord's Supper. Love clothes itself in these commands. Obedience to all the will of God is its natural outworking and manifestation. So is it made perfect. The new life runs in the channels of God's will. Its native language is: "I will run in the paths of thy commandments." Thus, while walking in truth fulfills itself in love, love fulfills itself in all obedience. And thus the love of John's exhortation is "not an effeminate, self-seeking, self complacent love, but a love which manifests itself in the steady discharge of every obligation." It is no mere emotional or sentimental principle that he has in mind, but a vigorous, practical spring of action, such as that which we see in the Father and was manifest in Jesus Christ. **This is the commandment.** The one commandment in which God's other commandments are summed up. (Alford.) Or, at least, a principal command, which has many applications, and covers much of the ground of Christian action. **That, as ye** (Cyria and her children) **have heard from the beginning.** From the time when ye first heard anything about Christianity. **Ye should walk in it.** That is, in love. If 'it' meant the commandment, the preposition governing it would have been "after," or according to, as in former part of the verse. Walking in love is doing the practical deeds of love. The specific deed of love which the apostle intends at this point is the exercise of brotherly love. And this is the argument of the whole verse: Love as a principle, or God's love in the soul, leads to the doing of the commands. A chief command, or the substance of all the commands, is that we should have all our walk in love, that all our acting should be in love, which includes our acting toward our brethren. Therefore, if we have the love of God in us, we shall do God's will as to the particular matter of brotherly love. And so the particular command of ver. 5 is enforced by an argument derived from love inself.

7. For. This introduces a reason why Cyria and her children should adhere steadfastly to the gospel command of love, and continue to walk in love, and why the writer so much urges it. John teaches impressively that one of the best preservatives against being led away into the error of false teachers is to keep one's self in the life of spiritual love. As long as this love abides warm and active in the heart, we are comparatively safe against the snares of doctrinal error. For it is an instinct that follows and distinguishes the truth, as the bee does the honey. John feels that if the persons addressed let their love wax cold and their practical spiritual life shrink up, they would be a ready prey for the errorists who were abroad, many in number, like devouring beasts and wily serpents. "Therefore, by all means," he says, "continue to walk in love." Ecclesiastical history shows that not till the early churches waxed cold in their love, in practical spiritual vitality, did antichrist make effectual inroads upon

who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

deceivers are gone forth into the world, *even* they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the
8 flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye [1]lose not the things which [2]we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.

1 Or, *destroy*.....2 Many ancient authorities read *ye*.

them, and errors of docetism and sacramentarianism flourish. Deadness of experience was the fatal step towards falsity of doctrine. Materialism, spiritualism, and other forms of religious error, are far more likely to allure adherents from the cold and lifeless members of our churches, than from others. There is indeed another class of Christians who are easily duped by doctrinal extravagances—namely, such as are puffed up with spiritual pride. Yet these are not another class, for as a rule these very ones are, above all, lacking in tender love of the brethren. Spiritual pride is a form of self-love, which excludes the finer emotions of love to all the church. The statement to be emphasized here is that the perversion of one's inner spiritual life exposes one to the power of error. But there was a special reason for adhering to brotherly love, in the form of error which the false teachers were inculcating at the time John wrote. They were teaching that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh, that he had only the appearance of human nature. This teaching was logically a foe to the existence of brotherly love. For love is received only in union with God. And no man can come into union with God save through the incarnation of his Son. And if Christ be not actually incarnated, then union with God, and consequent spiritual love, are impossible. Wherefore, John says, "Cling to this love, walk in it, as something which the deceivers are undermining by their false doctrine of the person of Christ." In another way still, this deceptive doctrine of Christ was utterly against the exercise of brotherly love—namely, this: We love our brother first in the human nature of Christ. If he had no human nature, if he did not truly become one of us, then we shall be far less likely to love our brethren. "Therefore," would John say, "hold to this matter of Christian love as something which the errorists would certainly cheat you out of, or render impracticable." This whole point illustrates how directly a great error concerning Christ may affect one's religious experience and life, and the unspeakable importance of the Christian guarding himself against the slightest departure from right Christological beliefs. **Many deceivers** (whose work is to make others wander) **are entered** (rather, *are gone forth*, perhaps *from us*, as in 1 John 2: 19) **into the world.** In doing so they became missionaries of error. **Who confess not** (Revised Version, "Even they that confess not") **that Jesus Christ is come** (*cometh*) **in the flesh.** Thus denying the fact and even the possibility of the incarnation. The expression is not used of the second coming of Christ. **This** (*such an one* as just described; οὗτος here nearly equal to τοιοῦτος, as in 1 John 2: 22, "Odes" of Pindar, 4, 38, and possibly Matt. 16: 18) **is a** (*the*) **deceiver and an** (*the*) **antichrist.** The definite article is expressed with both nouns in the Greek. The one talked of and warned against in the primitive teaching, or at least one fulfilling the idea of the antichrist. See on 1 John 2: 18, 22; 4: 3. Here, as before, is evidence that an antichrist is not one who denies outright the Lord Jesus Christ, but one who, professing to receive Christ, yet denies essential things about him. It is one who teaches Christ, yet not *the* Christ in his full nature and office. It is evident, with this definition, that there are many antichrists still in the world.

8. Look to yourselves. *Be on your guard against, beware of, yourselves.* (Phil. 3: 2.) It is possible that Cyria and her children may have been in some peculiar danger, may have just begun to come short, or at least to listen to one of the false charmers. Hence his sudden cry of warning, designed to be as a shock to persons on the very edge of peril. **That we** (rather, *ye*) **lose not those things which** (or, *what*) **we** (rather, *ye*) **have wrought.** That is, in the past for their own salvation (Phil. 2: 12) and for the truth (Gal. 2: 18) among the people. Their own work would be subverted, and its results greatly marred, if not annulled, should they slide into the vortex of the errorists, whose teaching, as truly as that of the Judaists of Galatia, brought in

9 Whosoever trangresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in

9 Whosoever [1] goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth

1 Or, *taketh the lead.*

another gospel. **But that we** (rather, *ye*) **receive a full reward.** A reward that is full. The term 'full' is predicative and emphatic. Their adhesion to the pure truth of the gospel, especially under strong temptation, should bring them the fullest reward of life and joy, beginning in this world, but perfected in the next. Every Christian who reaches heaven will have all the joy he can contain; but the faithful, growing Christian will have a capacity for a far larger life and joy than the unfaithful one, and in that respect enjoy a fuller reward. A man is saved by grace through faith, but he is rewarded at last according to his works. (1 Peter 1: 17; Rom. 2: 6; Rev. 22: 12.) The second person has been given to the verbs of this verse, in accordance with the latest judgments of the original text.

9-13. Doctrinal Error as to Christ Involves Atheism. Treatment to be Rendered to those who Hold the Error of Antichrist. Fullness of John's Heart toward the Absent Family to whom he writes. Greeting from Certain of Cyria's Kindred.

There is a wonderful exhibition of both severity and tenderness in this part of the Epistle; severity toward the errrorists, tenderness toward the truth-loving Christian. A side of John's character is revealed that is sometimes ignored. It is, indeed, the truly tender man who can be severe. The beloved disciple was a son of thunder.

9. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ (the doctrine relating to Christ) **hath not God** (himself). The word 'God' is in the place of emphasis in the Greek. Any radical departure from the true doctrine of Christ's nature is in fact atheism. One cannot theorize against Christ, without theorizing against God. He who rejects Christ rejects the God and Father of Christ. There is a kind of double statement of the errorists' fault in our passage. 'Transgresseth' does not mean here the committing of sin in general, but, in etymological strictness, the idea of going beyond, or going before. See Revised Version. It is here spoken of those who think they have gotten before, or beyond, others in the doctrine of Christ. A doctrinal transgression is meant, a getting beyond the truth, a heady and froward departure from the truth. It seems to be a fit term to apply to those self-confident progressives in all ages, who leave behind the orthodox standards, deeming them outworn. But whosoever gets ahead, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, is a false progressive. The doctrine of Christ referred to by John is, as the connection suggests, that which respects his person. The true doctrine was that he was the eternal son of God come in real flesh, the Word made flesh, living as one of us, and having a real human nature as well as very Deity. Such was the Christ who had come to save men. Now, as we learn in the first Epistle as well, a class of professed Christian teachers had arisen, who denied this true doctrine, and claimed that Christ only *appeared* to have a human nature, and hence was in no true sense incarnate. It was a species of teaching which in fact overturned the Christian system, and made spiritual life and love in us impossible. If true, there could be no such thing as an atonement for sin, and no such attainment as union with God, since both these are by the human nature of Christ in mysterious connection with the divine. More than this, those who teach these things have not God. Logically, they are atheists. They deny the God in Christ, revealing himself by Christ, and the Father's true relation to Christ; and they deny the Father's express revelation concerning the person of Christ, thus making him a liar, the same as no God. Nor do those who so pervert the facts of Christ's person, have God in an experimental sense. They dispossess themselves of God practically as well as theoretically. When one departs so far in his theory he is not a Christian. What an illiberal person this John is forsooth! Some of the false teachers referred to were no doubt amiable and morally consistent persons; yet John declares them godless, simply because they departed from the doctrine of Christ. He judged them

the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.
10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:
11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and
10 the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house,
11 and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.

by their views. See on 1 John 2: 23: 5: 12. **He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ.** ('Of Christ' is of course understood from what precedes, though the words are not in the best text.) **He** (see use of οὗτος in ver. 8) **hath both the Father and the Son.** He has the Son just as he is, and he who thus has the Son has the Father also; since the very relation of son implies a father, and the God-nature of the one is the God-nature of the other; and he who has taken the Son as he is has taken the Father's word concerning him, and hence the Father himself. Besides the natural and and spiritual union of Father and Son is such that he who truly has the one has the other. See John 14: 6–9. The following great truths are implied: 1. The incarnation of Christ is the very basis of Christianity. 2. Christ has one divine nature with the Father. 3. Our doctrine does affect our Christian standing. How important John's communication to Cyria in this brief letter!

10. If there come any unto you. Better, as in the Revised Version, *If any one cometh to you.* The mood (indicative) shows that the case is not merely hypothetical. Such persons were sure to come, or indeed had already come. If some had already been entertained by Cyria, this would account for the sharpness of his warning in ver. 8, and make more natural the great directness and emphasis of the order in the present verse. The home of Cyria was evidently a hospitable one, where itinerant ministers were wont to find entertainment. Evangelists and teachers were passing from church to church, and from place to place, probably much more than we now witness. The generous family is warned against receiving to their home such visitors indiscriminately. If one comes bearing the false view of Christ just described, they are not to entertain him. John tells them this with apostolic authority; not with spite towards the deceivers, but in the interest of the precious faith, and of precious friends. He does not forbid an act of humanity to even a false teacher, if perishing with hunger or sickness. The false teacher in question comes not as a mendicant for food and shelter, but as a Christian minister, to receive attention as such; in which case he is not to be admitted to hospitality, for that would be to recognize him as a minister of Christ. The woman's house was a temporary home of traveling Christian ministers. The neighbors, the Church, so understood it. If she had there the false, were they not the same to her as the true? Did she not indorse them? Besides, to receive them would be to give them aid and comfort in their perverse position, and encourage them in feeling that they could corrupt the gospel, and continue all their privileges. What is more, they should not be received, because their coming might vitiate the doctrines of the family. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. 15: 33.) One cannot touch fire without being burned. In all this warning of John there is plainly implied the duty of separating from all teachers who come under the head of antichrist (see notes on ver. 7), not only in the Church but outside of the Church. This is a "withdrawal" that means something. Compare 1 Cor. 5: 11; also Rom. 16: 17; Gal. 1: 8, 9; 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14; 2 Tim. 3: 5; Titus 3: 10, 11. The apostles require us to be very decided in marking and avoiding those who, assuming to be Christ's servants, are yet destroying the Christian system by deceptive teachings or gravely defective conduct. **Into your house** (literally, *into house*) —a familiar expression.

11. For he that biddeth him God speed (the same word, χαίρειν, which in James 1: 1 is rendered *greeting*, in the Common Version **is partaker of his evil deeds.** Compare Revised Version. The fellowship of evil deeds, in all their enormity, is thus established between the well-wisher and the evil doer. The force of the statement is obvious, and its argument undoubted. We are to avoid every act, positive or negative, implying community with antichrist. Note that John calls the acts of the errorists 'evil deeds.'

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your

Their perversion of the true doctrine of Christ was as really an evil deed as any common immorality. "This command [in ver. 10, 11] has been by some laid to the fiery and zealous spirit of St. John, and it has been said that a true Christian spirit of love teaches us otherwise. But as rightly understood, we see that this is not so. Nor are we at liberty to set aside direct ethical injunctions of the Lord's apostles in this manner. Varieties of individual character may play on the surface of their writings; but in these solemn commands which come up from the depths, we must recognize the power of that one Spirit of truth which moved them all as one. It would have been infinitely better for the Church now, if this command had been observed in all ages by her faithful sons." (Alford.) Let all our people be firm in their attitude of avoidance towards those who, boasting the name of Christians, practically destroy Christ. So doing they may be called illiberal, but they will carry out the earnest injunction of John, and show a jealousy for the truth.

12. Having passed through our apostle's reminders of love and sound doctrine, and his terrible charge as to the errorists, we reach his full-hearted concluding words. **Having many** (emphatic) **things to write to you.** To write, in case he had no plan or hope of soon visiting the family. John was one who in the glow of writing had a perfect crowd of things press into mind, and the ardent man had to exercise a very determined will as to what to omit and when to stop. (John 21: 25; 3 John 13.) **I would not write** (this word understood, but not expressed in the Greek) **with paper and ink.** 'Paper,' the Egyptian papyrus, probably the so-called Augustan or Claudian. This and the 'ink,' commonly made of soot and water, thickened with gum, the writing-reed (3 John 13), probably split, were the New Testament writing materials. (Lücke.) The paper was prepared by gluing together the membranes of the papyrus plant, reed, or flag. Being comparatively cheap, it superseded earlier materials for writing, such as lead plates, stones, and skins of animals. The archæologists tell us that the books of the New Testament were written at first on this preparation. **But I trust** (rather, *hope*) **to come** (γενέσθαι, not ἐλθεῖν) **unto you.** He speaks with caution. He does not know certainly that the way will be open for him to go. But he trusts it will be. He is making plans for this. He submits, however, to the wider plans of God. The inspiration of the apostles applied to the truth in hand which they were communicating. It did not imply infinite knowledge. About the general affairs of life, and movements before them, they seem to have had the same uncertainty which we have (Acts 20: 22), and they were not safe against mistakes in common actions. (Gal. 2: 11-14, and possibly Acts 21: 26.) Whether John's hope of visiting the house of Cyria was fulfilled or not, we have no means of knowing. Probably it was. **And to speak face to face.** (Literally, *mouth to mouth*, not an English idiom.) While the old apostle writes to the beloved family, his heart warms, and a crowd of things come into his mind of which he would speak for their instruction and joy; so many, and of such a kind, that he cannot do justice to them with pen and paper. He must wait and write them on their hearts with the living tongue, when he can help his expression by the tones of his voice, the changes of his countenance, his look into their eyes, and their own interposed questions as they should talk "mouth to mouth." We would like to have some of those many things that he would speak to them. But we must conclude that his feeling that for the rest writing was inadequate, and he must wait for the hour of personal interview, was altogether providential. He had written all that it was best to write to the family at present, all that it was best to have come down to us in the letter. For the Spirit who inspired John foresaw that it was to be for us as well as for those near in time and place. The Spirit ordered that this writer should close just where he did. In the New Testament there is neither too much nor too little for our highest discipline, howbeit a thousand things are left there unsaid about which we have curiosity. The wisdom of God is as truly exercised in the omissions and silences of Scripture as in the

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

13 joy may be made full. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

things said. **That our** (whether this should be 'our' or *your*, the authority is about equally balanced) **joy may be full.** Filled up, made utterly complete. See 1 John 1: 4, and notes thereon. The cause of the joy in the present case will be both the personal presence of the apostle (Bengel), and the full communication of the truth in oral discourse (Braune.) Personal meeting would be an occasion of mutual refreshment and joy. (Rom. 1: 12; 15: 32.) And then the ministry of the word of life, in such fullness and power as would come of a personal visit, would stimulate the family's joy to the highest pitch. To promote Christian joy is of itself a worthy end of a gospel ministry (2 Cor. 1: 24), and must not be lost sight of in the proportional division of the word to the people, and in the meetings of the church. In the word of truth and in the communion of saints are the highest conditions of spiritual joy.

13. The children of thy elect sister ('elect' is emphatic) **greet** (*salute*) **thee.** On the meaning of this epithet, and the inference from its use in case of more than one person in the same letter, see on ver. 1. It was customary for the apostles, in writing to individuals or churches, to communicate the loving greetings of fellow-Christians who might be at hand when they were writing. We judge that it was a common thing for the early Christians to send salutations to their absent brethren and sisters. The closing chapter of the Epistle to the Romans affords a remarkable instance. In such salutations, both in their source and destination, there is an individualizing of Christians, and a marking of their personal prominence in Christ. Christianity honors and brings out the individual. Compare John 10: 3. The present salutation was for Cyria in particular; and it came from the children of her own sister, both according to the flesh, and in Christ. These children seem to have been near John, in his very society. Very likely John was stopping with them when he wrote. It is supposed that the sister herself was dead; or she may have been living away at the time. But the Christian children remembered their Christian aunt, and sent her their greeting with John's message. This greeting, like all the salutations which traveled from one Christian to another in those primitive times, was more than a formality, more than a good wish. It was an assurance of continued spiritual fellowship; it was a greeting in recognition of a common union in the Lord. A spiritual emotion went out with it to the party saluted, such as can arise in one regenerate heart towards another that abides faithful. It was a motion of the Spirit from one heart to another, strengthening the bond of fellowship and increasing Christian joy. It was one of God's beautiful ministries of brotherly love. The **amen** of the old Received Text and the Common Version, should undoubtedly be omitted.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

THE elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

1 The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth.

1–4. THE WRITER'S AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS TO GAIUS; HIS GOOD WISHES FOR HIM, AND HIS JOY IN REFERENCE TO HIM.

1. The elder. See on 2 John 1. The writer identifies himself by an ordinary, not an extraordinary, title, by which, apparently, he was particularly well known, and long known; and hence the article. John was an apostle, selected by Jesus when on earth. But he does not choose to mention the honor or authority derived from that office. It was particularly necessary for Paul, in his epistles, to assert his apostleship, because, having been appointed thereto after Christ had withdrawn to heaven, his title to the office was often denied by unfriendly parties. The title, or heading, which ascribes our Epistle to John, and makes it the third in order, is found in some of the oldest manuscripts, as indeed are those of the First and Second Epistles, and is a testimony of much weight as to its supposed origin. There is an air of authority, a supervising interest, and a certain absoluteness in the teaching of our Epistle, as well as in that of the preceding one, which most powerfully suggests an apostolic, rather than *merely* presbyterial, origin. Can we imagine any one short of an apostle saying such words as we find in ver. 10 and 12 of our Epistle, and in ver. 7 and 10 of the second? And then the manner, the peculiar thinking, the theological conception, the spirit, of John the apostle, impress themselves upon us almost everywhere in these Epistles. **To** (writing to, making address to) **Gaius.** Same as the Latin *Caius*. Where he lived we do not know, probably in Asia Minor, away from Ephesus, and on a thoroughfare naturally taken by missionaries going to remote parts. (Ver. 6.) He was a man of prominence, able not only to entertain, but to help on their way, traveling evangelists. There was a Gaius of Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 14), whom Paul baptized, and who was pre-eminently hospitable. (Rom. 16: 23.) There was a Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), a missionary companion of Paul. There was a Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20: 4), who went with Paul and Timothy on at least one of their evangelizing visits. It is the conjecture of several that this latter was the one addressed by John. Ver. 4 makes this somewhat doubtful. Besides, there was a long space of years between Paul's era and the time at which John is writing. The name was one of the commonest. (Alford.) One of the names is given in the "Apostolic Constitutions" as Bishop of Pergamos. **The well beloved.** A strong and most enviable distinguishing title, marking a character by which he was generally and cordially known. The term is not a passive participle, but an adjective denoting a quality, characteristic, or activity of that to which it is applied. (Kühner § 234, 1, i.; Winer § 16, 3, 4th ed.) It means *lovely, lovable;* and hence beloved by all those sympathizing in his Christian traits. He was a lovely Christian. Grace had exercised a softening, refining influence upon him. He was forbearing and benevolent; he was spiritually minded and peaceful. His face was a benediction; his voice chastened and assuring. He drew to himself the tender regard of his brethren, and was a delight to Christ. **Whom I** (emphatic) **love.** Loved in general, John loved him in particular. Nor is he afraid to tell him so. **In the truth.** Not truly, but in the truth-element, in truth as a living system or principle, reflecting and involving the divine nature. The words express the nature, ground, and sphere of John's love to Gaius. It is not an earthly love, having a temporary inspiration or reason. The truth of God had become a living element of the soul, both in Gaius and in John. John loved Gaius because he discerned in him, in a marked degree, the true life of Christ which he realized in himself. He felt a union with him in the new life. There was between them a common experience of God. This was love in the heavenly sense, and without end. What a lesson in the understanding of

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.
3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

2 Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prosper-
3 eth. For I [1]rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walk-

1 Or, *rejoice greatly when brethren come and bear witness.*

brotherly love! In the conception of John, love, truth, and life appear to be a kind of trinity, each in all, and all in each, and together forming the unity of the light (1 John 1:5) of God, into which we enter in regeneration.

2. Beloved. John's soul clings to Gaius, and he cannot let go the epithet. The idea it represents grows vivid as he writes. **I wish above all things that** (better, *I pray that in all things*, Revised Version) **thou mayest prosper** (recognizing an agency in the prosperity above that of Gaius himself), **and be in health.** In literal bodily health. The phrase 'in' (or *concerning*) "all things" (not "above all things," which would seem to elevate the temporal above the spiritual) probably belongs exclusively to the first verb. Some have thought that because John prays for the health of Gaius, the latter must have been sick at the time this letter was written. There is no need of supposing this. It is as fitting to desire the good health of a well person as that of a sick person. John knew that the Christian is liable to bodily sicknesses, and he wishes that his brother beloved may be exempt from them as far as possible. Sickness may be sanctified to us; but sound health is a good in itself, for which—as for general temporal prosperity—it is right to pray. In sound health we have more personal comfort, and can accomplish more. It is not an unimportant fact that Christianity authorizes us to desire for one another not only temporal prosperity in general, but good physical health in particular. **Even as thy soul prospereth.** In the same relative measure. John knows from the most satisfactory testimony (ver. 3) that the soul of Gaius is prospering, that he is spiritually sound in condition and experience, and he prays that his temporal life may be equally prosperous, in an equally sound condition. The soul prosperity of the Christian is made the measure of his other prosperity. Has any one a right to expect more? But, alas! what, upon this measure, would be the outward prosperity of the sinner, whose spiritual condition is well described in Isa. 1:5, 6? And of many professed Christians it might be said that if the prayer of John were made for them, according to the standard in the case of Gaius, they would have only sickness and misfortune. Perhaps not many would willingly consent to have their health and worldly success measured in this way. There seems to have been a gauging of the health of some in the Corinthian Church to this standard, as a matter of judgment. (1 Cor. 11:30.) But Gaius could not suffer by this measure.

3. For (γὰρ=γὲ ἄρα, the causal demonstrative, while ὅτι is the causal relative; its retention in the text is demanded by both internal and external evidence) introduces confirmation of the statement of the soul prosperity of Gaius. The confirmation lies not in his joy, but in the testimony of visiting brethren, and on account of this he rejoices; and he puts joy and testimony all together in one heart-full utterance. **I rejoiced greatly.** See 2 John 4. He is intensely emotional down to old age, and we love him for it. **When the brethren came** ('the' before 'brethren' is not in the Greek text). They came at successive times, and probably more than one set of them, thus making the testimony very ample. **And testified of the truth** (literally, *unto thy truth*, Revised Version) **that is in thee.** The truth belonging to, and distinguishing thee. The brethren were doubtless evangelists, or missionaries. Compare ver. 5–8. It is a simple term which Paul is pleased often to apply to such workers. (1 Cor. 16:12; 2 Cor. 9:3; 11:9; Gal. 1:2, etc.) The truth which belonged to Gaius, and was so amply witnessed, was the gospel of the Son of God vitalized in personal experience and made a part of him. This truth is a reflection, or efflux, of the divine nature, and he who receives it will not only be sound in belief, but will have a soul conforming to God. The truth is in him, not as a mere abstraction, not as a mere creed, but as a life of God. **Even as thou walkest in the truth.** 'In truth' (not *the* truth) is not truly, but in the truth element or sphere. The brethren had evidence that the truth was in Gaius from the

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

4 est in truth. Greater joy have I none than [1] this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.
5 Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever

1 Or, *these things, that I may hear.*

way he walked in it, from his daily life, from his deeds of love. (2 John 4: 5.) "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7: 16.) The action of Gaius was that of one who knew and felt the truth in his heart. He uttered the views, he illustrated the obedience, he showed the charity, of a man created anew in Christ. These things were manifested spontaneously, as if connected with a life within. So that the fact of this life was impressed upon others. Men went away from him, not in doubt or suspense about his spiritual standing and attainments. They were even constrained to speak of the case. They bore a glad report of it to John. And John, on his part, was made to rejoice exceedingly on account of it. How enviable was the Christian position of Gaius! How high the commendation he received! What better thing could be said of him? He was a man in whom the divine truth lived, a tangible proof of Christianity, a convincing evidence that the life of God, through Christ, had come to men! He who once was a dark, lost sinner was now a shining light. Men took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus and learned of him.

4. I have no greater joy, etc. 'Greater' in the Greek is the comparative of a comparative, such as is sometimes formed "for the sake of emphasis." (Buttmann.) The best authorized text may be translated nearly literally: *Greater joy have I none than these things.* This distributes the emphasis according to the expressive Greek, and correctly locates the negative, with no loss to the style. **To hear that,** etc. (ἵνα, explicative, says Alford, as constantly in John after the demonstrative pronoun; introducing, says Lightfoot, the clause which describes the purport of the pronoun; but in the older classical Greek always denoting motive or design). Literally, *that I hear of my children walking in truth.* **Walk** (continuously, habitually) **in truth,** Revised Version "in the truth." Here John justifies his exceeding joy in Gaius' case, and tells what his habit of feeling was with regard to *all* his well-doing children, as well as Gaius. It is implied that Gaius was one of his children, explaining his peculiar interest in him. It shows the wideness of John's personal interest, in that it extended to many besides Gaius. The deepest meaning of 'children' requires that those referred to be persons converted through the agency of John. (1 Cor. 4: 15; 1 Tim. 1; 2; Philem. 10.) Yet, as an old man and a kind of chief pastor, he doubtless reckoned as his children all the Christians in that region. He felt an interest and love for them, as a father for his children. This, in part, made him joyful to hear good things about them. He specifies the good in them that above all else made him glad: their walking in the truth as the element of their spiritual being, the bound of all their living; the patent fact that they both led the life and honored the doctrines of the truth. While others about them might fall into grievous sin or error, they were steadfast in the truth. Others (2 John 7) might deny the incarnation of Christ, with the involved facts of atonement and our union with God, but they remained true. Others might violate the law of brotherly love, yet they were faithful. This would give the apostle unspeakable delight. 'I have no greater joy,' he said. For he therein saw his Master honored, his own ministry not in vain, his own spiritual children having the greatest good, and, in place of being a stumbling block in the way of the gospel, giving stimulus to other Christians and affording the best evidence that the gospel is true. Such walking produces joy in God himself, in the angels, and in all shepherds of the flock on earth. But if there be such joy in us over those near to us who walk in the truth, what must be the pain when dear ones turn aside from the truth in doctrine or life? There is no greater pain than this. How cruel are they who thus pierce and crush the hearts of any who are watching solicitously for their souls!

5–8. Commendation of Gaius for his Kindness to Missionary Brethren.

5. Beloved. The lovely character of Gaius is still before him; his heart still glows with love towards him. This is the third time, in the course of five verses, that John has ap-

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

6 thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal; who bear witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward

plied this term to Gaius; besides a direct assertion that he loved him. The intensity of his affection is most marked. And the basis, the common condition, in both the lover and the loved, is purely spiritual. **Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers.** The Revised Version translates, "Thou doest a faithful work"—that is, a work worthy of faithful men and men of faith, faithful to the claims of the case, and done in a faithful spirit. 'In whatsoever thou doest (the aorist tense shows that a real past work is in mind) to the brethren and to strangers.' The Revised Version renders this "Toward them that are brethren and strangers withal." The Bible Union Version reads, "To the brethren and that to strangers." The idea is that they were brethren and at the same time strangers to Gaius. Brethren they were who had been on a missionary expedition in regions beyond where Gaius lived. John had dispatched some evangelists to a somewhat remote field. On their way, they call upon the church of which Gaius is a member, bearing with them a letter to the church from John. The church, through the influence of a prominent ambitious member, or probably officer, declines to receive the letter or the brethren. But Gaius, on his own individual responsibility, takes them to his home, cares for them, and forwards them on their gospel journey in a manner worthy of their calling as messengers of God. 'Strangers' to Gaius, they yet had come indorsed and commended by John, were on a blessed mission, were brethren in the Lord, and no man or company could hinder him from treating them accordingly. He gave them his confidence, his love, his home, and his help. This was, in the largest sense, Christian hospitality. For this John commends him, as he had before commended him for his truth and walk. What is hospitality as enjoined in the New Testament? It is kindness to strangers, especially those who are Christians. It is showing them first a loving spirit, and then, if needful, affording them service and help. It is something which the apostles have often brought to our attention. (Rom. 12: 13; Heb. 13: 2; 1 Peter 4: 9, 10.) In the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, it is laid down among the qualifications of an elder that he should be "given to hospitality." (1 Tim. 3: 2; Titus 1: 8.) But the passages just cited show that this gospel grace and duty should be by no means limited to the elders. It is required of all. Even the poor man, though he has no "prophet's chamber," can manifest the hospitable spirit. The coming of a Christian stranger has brought a benediction to one's home and heart. See 1 Kings 17: 8–24; 2 Kings 4: 8–37; 8: 1–6; compare 2 Sam. 6: 10, 11. A genuine hospitality is one of the most beautiful and gainful duties to God's children. Gaius was blessed for his deed, by John's approval at least. Be kind to God's children because they are his. You will be blessed in your souls, and, very likely, in basket and store. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. 7: 2.) "Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." (Luke 6: 38.) He that giveth a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward. (Matt. 10: 42; Mark 9: 41.) "Inasmuch," said Jesus, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25: 40.) Any kindness we do to a Christian, is regarded by Christ as done to himself.

6. Which (or, *who*—namely, the stranger-brethren having returned to John) **have borne witness** (literally, *bore witness*) **of thy charity** (or, *love*) **before the church**—akin to our expression, "in church," or "in meeting." It is the church where John was living when he wrote this letter. The 'charity,' or *love*, referred to is that manifested in Gaius' hospitality. That hospitality was Christian love in action, and one of the best exhibitions of it. It seems to have been an established custom for the missionaries going out from any church to return to it in due time, and report their experience while absent in their work. Thus Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch, whence they had gone forth, and reported all that the Lord had done with them. So apparently did the brethren of our Epistle, and in their narrative declared

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.
8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

7 on their journey worthily of God: because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking noth-
8 ing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.

their experience at the hands of Gaius. It was good for the whole assembled church to hear the story of such love. They would thank God on this behalf and be stimulated by the example. **Whom if thou,** etc. Better, "*whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God.*" (Revised Version.) Having sent them forward on their mission in a manner which they are worthy of as God's messengers, Gaius had been the more carful to supply them for their journey, and do them honor as they departed, because of the nature of their mission and the Being they were serving. He treated the ambassadors royally for the sake of the King who sent them. And so the action toward the brethren became piety, and a divine honor. To send them forward in such a manner was well-doing, an act of beauty (καλῶς). It had been so in the present case. It would and will be so in all like cases. So much is expressed by the combination of the future and the aorist tenses of the verbs in the text. Having sent them forward thus, thou wilt do well, whether then, or whenever done. The future states here a permanent fact, or principle. Alford says: "It will then, and not till then, be a good act, when it is done."

7. Because that for his name's sake (rather, "*for the sake of the name*") **they went forth.** The language of this verse is introduced to strengthen the statement that it was well-doing to help forward the brethren, and to develop the supreme motive of the kindness shown. The assisted brethren were in the service of a certain 'Name,' and they were not to receive anything of the people to whom they were going. The latter consideration made the act of Gaius necessary; the former made it a gladness, and a glory. The 'Name' is that of Jesus Christ. (Acts 5: 41; 9: 16; 15: 26; Rom. 1: 5.) It was in behalf of this Name, to proclaim it and the salvation which it represented, to exalt it in the eyes of men, and, if need be, to die for it, that all the early preachers of the gospel went forth. It was that Name that summarized the gospel, called a world to repent, and thrilled believers as with a note from heaven. It was the inspiration of the great movement, and supplied the highest motive to all manner of co-operation. **Taking nothing** (the word, μηδέν, implies not merely a matter of fact, but a principle on the part of the evangelists themselves) **from the heathen.** It was their plan to receive nothing for themselves from the heathen whom they would evangelize. Hence their support must come from other sources, especially from churches already established, or from friends in them such as Gaius was. And so the deed, recalled in ver. 6, was good. The case appears to teach that missionaries going to evangelize a heathen people should go with their support already provided for. This justifies an essential policy of the modern missionary movement, and indicates the claim resting upon the settled churches to aid in the support of missionaries abroad. In the story of Gaius, let the churches read both their duty and privilege in relation to the missionary cause. Our Epistle may be called the missionary epistle. It brings before us a band of laborers going to the heathen, the Name they go to proclaim or to die for, and the source whence their support should be derived.

8. We therefore (in contrast to the heathen) **ought to receive** (*to undertake for, to support*) **such.** Not only the particular brethren sent forward by Gaius, but others serving the same Name abroad, and in similar need. **That we might** (may) **be** (literally, *become*) **fellow-helpers to the truth.** The Revised Version reads, "fellow-workers with the truth," but the meaning is probably "fellow-workers for the truth," as in the Bible Union Version. Those who receive well the preacher or missionary, and further him in his work, are co-workers with him in spreading abroad the gospel of God. The kind helper of the preacher is in one sense a preacher. The supporter of the missionary of the cross is himself a missionary. He who goes and he who sends are one in the work of the Great Commission. We see in Gaius the beautiful example of one who fully sympathized with the work of the gospel. It was his love of the gospel that made him so kind to its servants,

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.
10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he

9 I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among
10 them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and

so ready to further them on their way. His deed was done as if to Christ, and he was regarded as if a bearer of the truth to the ends of the earth.

9–14. Diotrephes Characterized, Blamed, Threatened. His Case Made the Occasion of Exhortation to Gaius. Demetrius Commended. A Cheerful Close of the Epistle.

9. I wrote (the best text reads, *somewhat*) **unto the church.** The church in the place where Gaius lived, and of which he was a member. The connection suggests that the 'somewhat' (τι) in the letter was concerning the missionary brethren. Here, then, is a writing of John not preserved. Not all the letters of the apostles are saved in the canon of Scripture, neither were designed to be. There is a suggestion in the letter being sent to the whole church, of a church responsibility toward gospel laborers. **But** (notwithstanding my care to write to the church) **Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them** (the persons implied in the term 'church') **receiveth us not.** He does not approve. That is the course he takes. He takes it upon himself to say that neither letter nor brethren must be received by the church. And the church is somewhat led by him. 'Us' includes John, as represented by his letter, and the brethren, in whose behalf it was presented.

We come now to the ambitious, arbitrary, pragmatical, jealous, self-seeking, place-hunting, rule-or-ruin, hard-talking man, Diotrephes, the prototype of many another oppressive dictator and willful alien in the Church of Christ. Whether he was a private member, a deacon, a minister, or, as Rothe says, a bishop, we know not. We know that he was in the church, both prominent and influential. His influence and persistency were so great that he was able to control the church. He was able by his sophistry or threats to lead the majority of the church to do a wrong thing. He may have actually succeeded in convincing the church that it ought not to receive either John's letter or the missionaries. He may have excited prejudice (ver. 10) against John and the workers, saying that they were only self-seekers. For it is a Diotrephes that thinks any one who stands in his way wholly selfish and black-hearted. He may have contended that they were troubled with too many missionary brethren, that their hospitality and means were too much taxed by them, that they had as much as they could do at home without aiding any outside work, that John was presuming too much on their liberality, or that he was assuming to control the church too much. In some way, doubtless, the man had been crossed by John, and his ambition keenly wounded; and he was willing to sacrifice church and brethren, in order to gratify his revenge. Possibly we have a hint, in our verse, as to the way in which his selfishness had been stung. I wrote to the church, says John. Diotrephes was not addressed at all. It is likely he had not even been mentioned in the letter; perhaps it had mentioned the name of some far humbler member instead. Diotrephes says within himself: "John shall not ignore me. He shall feel my importance in the church. He shall have a lesson. We will have nothing to do with him or his men." Saying this, he thinks more of himself than of apostolic authority, missionary work, the claims of brotherhood, or the real good of his church. He loves and serves himself supremely. What a contrast between Diotrephes and Gaius!

10. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember (or, *bring to remembrance*) **his deeds which he doeth.** Not only the work which he did in case of the letter and brethren, but the dark habit of the man since. **Prating** (literally, *boiling over*) **against us with malicious** (*wicked*) **words.** Now the apostle speaks with authority. Not with any vindictiveness, but with a God-given spirit of judgment, as Paul in 1 Cor. 5: 3-5, he utters himself concerning the raging devourer in the church. He will uncover this man to the church. Before all, this ambitious accuser shall know that he is known, and the church shall see how it was

himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.
11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth *them* out of the church.
11 Be loved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that

led. It appears from the words of this verse thus far, that Diotrephes had been engaged in a series of deeds of opposition, and was still engaged in them. For one thing, he talked, talked, talked; he overflowed, he boiled over, with talk. He would get excited, and run on, to work up hostility, and fulfill his selfish hate. The current of his talk was malicious words against John and the brethren, some of God's best servants. John's Epistle probes his case; what will his coming do? Our verse shows us the work of a possible bad element in the holy Church of Christ. It is the wolf in the fold. **And not content therewith** (not resting content upon these things), **neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would** (or, *and them that would he hindereth*). Instead of saying, as the word 'neither' would lead us to expect, "nor does he permit those that would," he puts it in the stronger positive form, *and those that would he hindereth.* There were, then, well-disposed members in the church. Gaius was one. The man's opposition is not all talk. **And casteth** (the well-disposed and remonstrating ones) **out of the church.** We confess ourselves unable to decide whether the casting out of the church means excommunication, or simply, forcibly shutting them out of the assemblies of the church. It seems hardly possible that it could have been excommunication on so slight a ground. Yet, so it may have been. The ground, in that case, would be alleged insubordination, because, forsooth, in opposition to Diotrephes, they wished to receive and entertain the missionary travelers! Gaius would be cut off by this process. Doubtless, discipline has sometimes taken this mad way when a church has fallen under the sway of passion, and the wild boar (Ps. 80: 13) wastes it. But it is sad work. Apropos to the idea that the casting out is merely from the assembled congregation, Braune remarks: "It might be possible that Diotrephes was wont to hold, or cause to be held, the meetings of the church in his own house, and refused admittance to those who were opposed to him." There was, at any rate, serious difficulty in the church. All was not smooth in even the apostolic churches. There were bad men, and there was bad work, then; and sometimes a perilous crisis came. But the truth, and the servants of the truth, have on the whole prevailed. Christianity has gained in spite of its false professors, and much unfortunate work; and it has proved itself divine. If John came, as he hoped, things were doubtless righted in the oppressed and torn church of Diotrephes and Gaius. And, even without apostolic visitation, many a rent and bleeding church has recovered itself through the vital energy of faith somewhere in it, and has put on strength and beauty; so recuperative is that body which in any of its members holds the life of God.

11. Beloved. The fourth time this glowing epithet has been applied to Gaius in this little Epistle. See on ver. 1, 2, 5. John is about to exhort Gaius, and there is an appeal in the very title he addresses him with. Undoubtedly there was an unspeakable relief in John's mind in turning from the black picture of Diotrephes to a fresh address to one whom he could call his beloved. What enhanced meaning (if possible) it would have to John, from the contrast just dwelt upon! **Follow not** (*imitate not*, as an example, 2 Thess. 3: 7, 9; Heb. 13: 7) **that which is evil.** 'That which is evil,' as shown in the case just treated. John feels so full of abhorrence towards it that he must exhort all, even the good Gaius, against it, against all its influence. "Do not," he says, "in any way catch the spirit of that man's acting. Do not return to him any such spirit as he has shown to you. Be no party to strife, injustice, or severity." **But that which is good.** 'That which is good'; all that is contrary to the work of Diotrephes; all that is illustrated in the examples of the good, such as Demetrius is, who is so commended in the next verse. Continue your kindness to Christ's messengers, your love of the truth, your help in forwarding the gospel in the regions beyond. Follow that which is peaceful and useful. Persevere in all this, notwithstanding your untoward surroundings. Thus even good men need exhortation, else John would not have given it to

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.
13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:
14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall

12 doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true.
13 I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen:
14 but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak

Gaius. The whole shows that to be a good member of the church it is necessary, not only to be sound in the faith, but to do kindly, useful deeds, and preserve in the soul the image of all that is good. (Phil. 4: 8, 9.) **He that doeth good** (as a habit, a life) **is of** (ἐκ) **God.** Is born of God, and partakes of his nature; has come into the sphere of God's light. Your well-doing, your kindness, your Christian helpfulness, proves your alliance with God in spiritual nature. See on 1 John 3: 10; 4: 2, 3. He that manifests the likeness of God is related to him in the new birth. **He that doeth evil hath not seen God.** See on 1 John 2: 3; 3: 6; 4: 8. Not to have seen God here means not to have any opening of the spiritual vision to him, or to be without any spiritual acquaintance with him; hence, utterly without the new birth. It is implied that the evil-doing Diotrephes is in this state, notwithstanding his Christian profession. Thus John assigns his case, and all similar cases, to their proper alternative. He does it in few words.

12. Demetrius. It is remarkable that the peculiar exhortation and character rule of ver. 11 should have upon its one side such an example as Diotrephes, and on the other such an example as Demetrius. With what satisfaction could the writer—taking Gaius in thought with him—turn from the former to the latter! Who is Demetrius? Is he a member of the church where Gaius lived? or is he one whom John sends there to bear the present needed letter and give support to the shattered cause? Not the former, since in that case John would have appealed to the good opinion of Gaius concerning Demetrius. The other view commends itself as reasonable. In sending him John emphasizes his good standing, in order that Gaius may receive him with confidence, and that others may be favorably influenced by his coming. **Hath the good report** (or *witness*) **of all**—that is, of all who know him. He is a man of good report. When 'witness' is used absolutely, as here, it always denotes good testimony. (Acts 6: 3; 10: 22, etc.) **And of the truth itself.** 'Truth' here must have a meaning harmonious with the Johannean view of it, so largely developed in these epistles. It is here the truth of the gospel as a living principle in Demetrius. That truth so manifestly in him testifies to him as to what he is, as Gaius indeed will see when he meets him. **Yea, and we also** (emphatic) **bear witness.** In this letter 'we' is chiefly the apostle himself, with some reminiscence perhaps of apostolic associates, whose voices he knew would be with him could they speak. Compare 1 John 1: 3. *And yet thou* (as the best critical text gives it) **knowest that our witness is true** (ἀληθής, not ἀληθινος). True in quality; true morally; true in the very strongest sense. Such pre-eminently is apostolic testimony, as Gaius knows. A manifestly weighty evidence of the apostolic origin of the letter. It is natural as coming from John the apostle (John 19: 35; 21: 24), but unnatural for another. Happy the Christian brother, who has as good a report as Demetrius had, and whose Christianity shines forth from him as unmistakably!

13. I had many things to write. His heart is full of them. The emergency suggests them. The strong personal attachment to the man addressed calls them up. But he must desist, till he can meet his friend face to face, as he hopes soon to do. Then he can pour out his thoughts, without the limits or restraints of paper and pen, and inscribe them on Gaius' heart with the vividness which personal interourse, the look of the face, and the tones of the voice are so well fitted to produce. **But I will not with ink and pen write unto thee.** I am unwilling to go on writing more to thee; present tense. See on 2 John 12.

14. We divide ver. 14 of the Common Version, and make a new verse (15) of the latter half, as Scrivener, Tischendorf, Alford, and practically the Bible Union Version, and as obviously required by the contents. **But I trust** (or *hope*) **I shall shortly see thee.**

speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

face to face. Peace *be* unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

He does not presume to say that he certainly shall see Gaius. The certainty of his going is not revealed to him. He remembers that he is an old man, that life at best is precarious, that some unlooked-for providence may intervene to deprive him of the coveted privilege of meeting his friend and caring for the torn and bleeding sheep of the church. See on 2 John 12. **And we shall speak face to face** (or, literally, *mouth to mouth*). As only the most confidential friends can. What a blissful season will there be then! The future indicative here denotes an assurance of hope that the delightful converse will be enjoyed.

15. Peace be to thee. How appropriate the benediction, seeing what troubles and distractions surrounded Gaius, and what anxieties and pains naturally filled his soul! Let the peace of Christ (John 14: 27) abide in thy soul; let all health, welfare, blessing (as expressed so strongly by the corresponding Hebrew term, שָׁלוֹם, and not excluded from the Greek term of the apostolic benedictions) come to thee; and let not outward troubles too much disturb thee. The apostolic benediction is more than a good wish; there seems to be something causative about it, conscious to him who pronounces it. **Our** (rather *the*) **friends salute thee.** These are Christian friends (compare John 11: 11; 15: 15; Acts 27: 3), brothers and sisters, abiding near John, who desire to greet Gaius in the Lord, to inspire his courage, and cultivate their spiritual union. **Greet the friends by name**—that is, individually and particularly. The Christian friends with Gaius, abiding faithful, amid the fierce work carried on by the false brother. "Call them each by name, and present our greeting as we would do if present." Christian individuality is highly regarded in the New Testament (compare John 10: 3), as spiritual union is much cultivated.

COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLE OF JUDE.

BY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

I. JUDE.

The name of our author in Hebrew would have been Yehuda (Judah); in Greek it is Ioudas (Jude). It means *praise*, *honor*. A Jude was an apostle. (Luke 6 : 16; Acts 1 : 13.) That Jude was also called "Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus" (Matt. 10 : 3); Thaddeus. (Mark 3 : 18.) In the Common Version, he is called "the brother" of James, but there being in the original no word for *brother*, the question has been raised whether *brother* or *son* should be supplied. In our Epistle *brother* is not supplied, but is a translation. Was the writer a brother of Jesus and also an apostle? or, was he only a brother of the Lord and not an apostle? Were the "brothers" of the Lord actual brothers? or, were they cousins? These questions have been much discussed. Not even an outline of the argument on either side can be given; the student will find aid in Meyer, Arnaud, Alford, Lange, Schaff, Andrews, Smith's "Bible Dictionary," Ellicott, Farrar, Mombert (an Excursus in Lange), and elsewhere. Such difficulties attend the subject, that a decision seems to be impossible. The "cousin theory" rests upon the assumption that it is not for the honor of Mary to suppose that she had any other children, and not for the honor of Jesus to suppose that he had any brothers; and to this assumption one may be easily led by false views of marriage. He who holds to the perpetual virginity of Mary, never yet proved, must believe that the "brothers" of Jesus were *not* brothers. With the cousin theory has been connected excessive honoring of Mary (Mariolatry).

Of the life of Jude considered as a younger brother of the Lord, and not as an apostle (the view which seems to have the fewest difficulties), little is known. He was at first an unbeliever. (John 7 : 5.) His conversion may have occurred soon after the resurrection of Christ. (Acts 1 : 14.) The Epistle yields almost the only data for estimating Jude's mental traits, and though these prove him to have been a man of clear perception, vivid imagination, intense sensibility, and strong will, they are not sufficient for making a thorough analysis. He may have been of a more tender nature than his Epistle alone would lead us to suppose. The vehemence of his spirit is not vindictiveness, but results from deep conscientiousness. It is the fruit of loyalty to Christ, made more than usually intense by knowledge of the rapid spread and growing insolence of error in the churches. Following, as the epistles stand in the English Testament, John's sweet breathings of love, Jude's concentrated invective, however just and needful, is like a tornado following the still hours of a summer's day

II. THE OBJECT AND THE PLAN OF THE EPISTLE.

The *object* is to exhort the readers to contend earnestly for the faith. (Ver. 3.) The necessity for so doing was great. Certain men, who had come stealthily into the churches,

were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It was of the utmost importance to save the churches from the ruin which threatened them.

The Epistle is very methodical, and as method is sometimes supposed to be unfavorable to feeling, the union here of strict method and intense feeling should be noted. The usual form of salutation precedes. (Ver. 1, 2.) After announcing the object (ver. 3), and expressing the urgent necessity for writing and exhorting (ver. 4), the writer first reminds the readers of the destruction sent in ancient times upon unbelieving Israelites (ver. 5), sinning angels (ver. 6), and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Ver. 7.) Then he proceeds to characterize the new class of sinners (ver. 8–16), contrasting them as to one of their traits, with Michael the archangel. In the course of the description he shows by a quotation from the book of "Enoch" (Henoch), that the men in question had been the object of prophetic denunciation. (Ver. 14, 15.) The description closed (ver. 16), the readers are reminded that the coming of such men had been declared by the apostles; are exhorted to make spiritual progress; to expect eternal life through the mercy of God; and to make a wise discrimination in their methods of treating the deceived members of the church. The Epistle closes with an uncommonly rich doxology.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLE.

The Epistle is both original and dependent. The latter is seen in its striking resemblance to the Second Epistle of Peter. See Introduction to that Epistle, III. The passages which are similar are the following:

2 Peter 1: 5.	Jude 3.
" 2: 1.	" 4.
" 2: 4.	" 6.
" 2: 6, 9, 10.	" 7, 8.
" 2: 11.	" 9.
" 2: 12.	" 10.
" 2: 15.	" 11,
" 2: 13-17.	" 12, 13.
" 2: 18.	" 16.
" 3: 1-3.	" 17, 18.

Farrar ("Early Days of Christianity"), in his translation of the Epistle has attempted to show what he regards as "the affinity between this Epistle and Second Peter, by printing in italics those identical or closely analogous words and phrases which occur in both." He presents about fifty-seven instances. In some of the cases adduced the resemblance is very marked: but in several of them it is clearly unjust to allege either designed or undesigned imitation, whether by Peter or by Jude. Some of the words cited are *common property*. *A slave* (more correctly a *bondservant*) *of Jesus Christ*, is used by Paul in Rom. 1 : 1; *a servant of God*, in Titus 1 : 1; *a servant of God*, in James 1 : 1, as well as in Peter and Jude. *Kept* is used in John 17 : 11, in 1 Peter 1 : 5, and elsewhere. *Angels* is so common a word that it is useless to cite cases. It is difficult to see how the use of such a word shows any special "affinity" between Peter and Jude. The same may be said of the very common words *denied*, *day*, *Master*, *Jesus Christ*, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, *flesh*, *example*, *blameless*, *majesty*, *power*, *now*, *Amen*. The address, *beloved*, is common

to Peter, John, and Jude. To *remind* ("put you in remembrance," Common Version) is common to Luke, John, Jude, and Peter. Yet some words and phrases are so peculiar as to show that one of the two writers (Jude or Peter) must have been in some degree dependent on the other. Many hold that Jude wrote first and some that Peter wrote first. If, on literary grounds, it may seem more probable that the former was the original writer, yet it seems improbable that the greatest of the twelve apostles would borrow so freely from one who held a comparatively obscure position in the primitive Church. It has been affirmed that the milder phraseology of Peter proves that the apostle purposely toned down the severe language of Jude. This is possible, but it is equally possible that Jude was stimulated by the apostle's powerful denunciations to write with still greater severity against the error and immorality with which he may be presumed to have been brought into closer contact than even Peter himself, whether Peter were still in the distant eastern city of Babylon (1 Peter 5 : 13), or in Rome as a prisoner. Assuming that Peter wrote first, concerning which, probably, there will always be opposite opinions, the questions arise : Did Jude deliberately copy from Peter? Or, was he so permeated with Peter's thoughts and language that he unconsciously used his material? In modern times the former would have been plagiarism (Latin, *plagium*, kidnapping). Kidnapping thought in another's words is a vice which was not unrecognized by literary men in ancient Rome. But, as has been remarked, neither epistle shows slavish dependence, actual copying, literary poverty and incapacity; but whichever should be held as posterior, it was prepared with literary freedom. The question of priority has been discussed by Huther, Dietlein, Farrar, and others. Though, as the present writer thinks, Jude wrote later than Peter, yet his epistle is marked for not a little originality, which is seen even in his bolder and severer utterances of what the apostle says in a manner more restrained, and of which more particular notice will be taken in our study of the text. All that has been said concerning the style of Peter's Second Epistle, may be said concerning Jude's with added emphasis.

IV. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

That Jude was its author may be believed for the following reasons : It is mentioned in the Latin Muratorian Fragment, the Greek original of which was written about A. D. 170. This Fragment put the Epistle among those books concerning which there was some difference of opinion ; yet it says that it is received in the Catholic [Church], or is reckoned among the Catholic [Epistles]. It is ascribed to Jude by Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 165–220, in Eusebius. Origen, A. D. 186–253, often quotes it ; Tertullian also, latter half of the second century ; the author of a treatise "commonly appended to the works of Cyprian, in which it is quoted as Scripture" (Westcott) ; Malchion, A. D. 260–272, a presbyter of Antioch ("a clear allusion to the Epistle of Jude"). It is quoted by Palladius, a friend of Chrysostom, A. D. 407. It "is contained in the Laodicene A. D. 363, Carthaginian A. D. 397, and so-called Apostolic catalogues" (Smith's "Bible Dictionary.") Though it was early received as a part of God's word, yet it was not received without some hesitation, this arising not from fear that it was a forgery, but from knowledge of its peculiar character, and from its similarity to the Second Epistle of Peter. Concerning its alleged quotations from the apocryphal book of Henoch, see on verse 14. Its internal character is not inconsistent with Christian teaching elsewhere, and shows the author to have been an intense lover of Christians and Christian truth.

V. TIME, PLACE OF WRITING, AND TO WHOM SENT.

Neither of these can be determined. Palestine may have been the place where, and the time suggested varies from A. D. 64 to A. D. 80. If the Epistle was written later than Peter's and before the destruction of Jerusalem, which latter is highly probable, it must have been written during the interval between the death of Peter and the destruction of the city—that is, before A. D. 70. (Fronmüller.) That it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed is to be presumed from its silence relative to that event. It does not profess to be sent to any given Church. In the latter part of the apostolic period, its warnings were greatly needed.

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called:
2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

1 [1]Jude, a [2]servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, [3]to them that are called, beloved in God the
2 Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

1 Gr. *Judas*.....2 Gr. *bondservant*.....3 Or, *to them that are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, being called.*

1, 2. INSCRIPTION AND INVOCATION.

1. Jude. See Introduction, I. **The servant**—*bond-servant.* See on 2 Peter 1: 1, and especially on 1 Peter 2: 18 ("servants") **Brother of James.** See Introduction, I. The writer may have referred to James, because the latter was better known. James had the oversight of the church in Jerusalem, wrote the Epistle of James, and was a man of influence. (Acts 12; 17; 15: 13-33; Gal. 2: 9.) A man of no humility would have taken pains to mention his kinship to the Lord; a man of ordinary humility might have mentioned it under the notion that thereby his usefulness would be extended. Jude avows himself a servant of the Lord; that he was a brother is not so much as hinted. **To them**, etc.—more correctly, *to the called who are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.* 'Called.' See 2 Peter 1: 3. **Sanctified** (properly, *beloved*) **by God.** Even if the Greek for *sanctified* were the true reading, the English should be sanctified *in*, which expresses a richer thought than sanctified *by*. Not instrumentality, but close connection with the life of God by communion with God himself is the thought expressed. If the true Greek is *beloved* (ἠγαπημένοις), which is probable, it is beloved *in* God. Some would supply thus: beloved in God *by us*, but no supply is necessary. **The Father.** God is the Father of the regenerated, but here the relation existing between God and Christ seems to be meant, as in Gal. 1: 1; Phil. 2: 11; Eph. 6: 23; 1 Peter 1: 2. **Preserved**—*kept*, which is simpler, and is the word generally used. **To** (*for*) **Jesus Christ.** The 'called' are Christ's. Those who are Christ's are God's, and those who are God's are Christ's. (John 17: 10.) See especially the petition in the Lord's high-priestly prayer: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." (John 17: 11.) See also John 17: 15. The 'called' are kept for Christ. No richer thought can be found even in the longest of Paul's epistles; a great pearl in a small casket. Thus of the 'called' two things are affirmed: 1. Beloved in God, the Father of Christ; 2. Kept for Christ. God is the keeper, and the keeping is for Christ. Having been kept till the present, it may be believed that they will be kept forever. Kept *by* God *for* Christ *from* evil. The prisoner was kept by a chain binding him to the keeper; the called are kept by love binding them to the Infinite Love.

REMARK.—Concerning different readings of Greek manuscripts, such as are found even in this first verse of our Epistle, see "Remarks" in the comments on 1 Peter 1: 8.

2. In ten of Paul's epistles, the invocation is an invocation of *grace* and *peace;* in three, of *grace*, *mercy*, and *peace;* in Hebrews, of *grace*, but standing at the end instead of the beginning. In all these but Hebrews, here assumed to be written by Paul, the source of the blessing invoked is given: *from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*, with very slight variation in form. In James, *greeting* is used. In both of Peter's epistles it is *grace* and *peace*, with the addition, *be multiplied;* in the Epistle before us, **mercy, and peace, and love,** with the same addition. John, in his First Epistle, uses no invocation whatever; in the second, *grace*, *mercy*, and *peace*, with the remarkable addition, *from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father;* in the third, *peace* at the close. Jude's invocation, then, is unlike not only Peter's in the Second Epistle, but all the others in the New Testament. It is worth something as showing his independence. "Grace," found in almost all the other epistles, is wanting. 'Mercy,' found in only three of Paul's epistles, and in Second John, is used, while 'love' is used in the invocation of no other epistle.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

3 Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the 4 saints. For there are certain men crept in privily,

'Mercy' is the unmerited source, 'peace' and 'love' are the blissful results, whether by 'love' is meant the mutual love of the readers, or their love to God, or God's love to them, or all three. See on 1 Peter 1: 2.

3, 4. THE NECESSITY FOR WRITING. Compare 1 Peter 1: 12, 13; 3: 1.

3. Beloved—a form of address seldom used. (3 John 2, 5, 11; 1 Peter 2: 11; 4: 12; 2 Peter 3: 1, 8, 14, 17.) It reflects light upon the writer's character. Without this tender word Jude might have been deemed constitutionally severe. Men who are naturally severe are sometimes, however, very tender in spirit. It is not impossible, therefore, that if we knew more of Jude's nature, we should be under the necessity of modifying a little what has just been said. *Diligence*, *earnestness*, implying strong desire and purpose. He was desiring and intending to write them of something, but the desire and purpose were arrested by a necessity which impelled him to do something else. **The common salvation.** Valuable manuscripts have (ἡμῶν) "our." This is adopted by Westcott and Hort and the Revised Version: *our* common salvation. This was the subject on which he earnestly desired to write them. 'Common'—not to Jews and Gentiles, but shared by all believers. See Titus 1: 4 ("common faith"); 2 Peter 1: 1 ("like precious faith"). See on the latter. 'Salvation'—effected for believers through the redeeming death of Christ, thus their actual salvation, not a system of doctrine. 'The common salvation'—the same for the learned and the ignorant. From the fact of a common salvation is easily deduced the duty of common Christian love. May the time come when the duty shall be as heartily felt as the fact is strongly believed! **Needful**—literally, *I had necessity*—that is, I felt impelled. He was impelled by what he knew of the influence of bad men who professed to be good men. **To write**—in a strain different from what he intended. A letter of *exhortation* was necessary. The inspired writers are remarkable for versatility in handling religious truth; sometimes reasoning, sometimes exhorting, sometimes doing both. The exigency required Jude to **exhort.** We should have been well instructed, doubtless, had he written as he first intended to write—on the common salvation. It is useless to regret that he changed his mind, and decided to rouse saints by rasping sinners. **Earnestly contend for**—one word in the Greek, a verb compounded with a preposition. The verb without the preposition is used in Luke 13: 24 ("*Strive* to enter in"). *Agonize* is the original word in English dress. It was used with reference to the striving of men in the Greek games to win the prize. As applied to that, it signifies the utmost possible effort of the will, through nerve and muscle, to overcome all competitors. The compound word is, "to fight standing upon a thing which is assaulted, and which the adversary desires to take away" (Dr. Mombert in Fronmüller). **The faith**—not a formula of words, but the entire scheme of Christianity, here distinguished by its leading characteristic. **Once** (*once for all*) **delivered.** The faith is a finality. It admits no addition and no subtraction. (Rev. 22: 18, 19.) But according to Romanism it is otherwise. The more Christianity is studied the more of itself it will reveal, but the book which contains it is complete. **The saints**—"those consecrated to him (the Lord), and so his. This term, as applied in the New Testament, refers to the normal or prescribed standard of Christian character, rather than the actual one. See 1 Cor. 1: 2, as compared with 1 Cor. 3: 2; 11: 21, etc. It belongs to all who profess to be disciples, and does not distinguish one class of them as superior to others in point of excellence." (Hackett's "Com. on the Acts," 9: 13). Yet see 1 Peter 2: 9, and comments. Indifference to assaults upon Christianity or any part of it, or to the gradual rise of error, however slight, is unworthy the Christian name. Vigorous defense of truth and positive attack of error is the duty of every Christian. Indifference to error is a sign of false liberalism and humiliating weakness. It finds no countenance in the example of the apostles. (1 Tim. 6: 3, 4; 2 Tim. 1: 13; 2: 16-18; 4: 2-4; Titus 1: 9-13.) And our Epistle is itself proof of the intensity of Jude's opposi-

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

even they who were of old, [1] written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying [2] our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

1 Or, *set forth* .....2 Or, *the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

tion to all departures from Christian truth. A single illustration may be in point. Should one teach that the rite of baptism as enjoined by Christ and the apostles had the form of immersion and no other form, but that in some later age was *changed by men* ("a human invention") into a rite very unlike it, sprinkling for example, and should defend the change as rightly made, though admitting it to have been made with no divine authority whatever, it is clear that the way would have been prepared for changing the Lord's Supper also. It is clear, indeed, that no limit could be placed to the changes which men might make in the Christian system. But the inspired word, "contend earnestly for the faith," positively forbids the first change, not less than the second. [1]

4. For introduces the reason for being under the necessity of writing this kind of a letter. **Certain men**–indefinite, but they must have been known to the readers. To affirm that by 'men' Jude intended to express the *unrenewed* nature of the false teachers, shows to what a strain it is possible to put words. **There are . . . crept in.** The Revised Version renders in the same way. Better, it is thought, *certain men crept in.* It refers to some past point of time, yet includes the idea that the men are still living, and living as members of churches. That such men were, during a greater or less period, members of churches is clear from Acts 20: 29, 30; 1 John 2: 19. These men came in *stealthily, privily*—that is, though openly received as members, they kept their false views to themselves, and managed to conceal awhile their impurity of life. They were hypocrites at the outset. Their errors and impurities may at first have existed only in germ, but they must have been rapidly developed. Whether more or less, their immoralities and errors were kept awhile so concealed that they themselves can be said to have crept into the church privily. **Before** (of old) **ordained**—not primarily, predetermined by the purpose of God, but *written before;* not written in Paul's epistles, or in Peter's, for 'of old' takes us back to an earlier period. They had long ago been described. According to the methods of interpreting the Old Testament in apostolic times, any passage of the Old Testament which foretells the coming of bad men could be applied to the men in question. A more definite reference is unnecessary. Pre-ordination of these men to punishment, however, is as true as pre-ordination of any other sinners to punishment. All incorrigible sinners are ordained to punishment in the sense that unforsaken sin will draw upon itself the punishment which it is God's holy and eternal will to inflict. **This condemnation**—the punishment, not yet named, but even now in his thoughts. **Ungodly men**—irreverent toward God, and therefore godless. God around them, over them, within them, yet are they *godless.* **Turning the grace**—the third special affirmation relative to certain men. The indefinite is becoming definite. 'The grace'—not grace given in regeneration, for the men give no evidence of renewal, but the grace offered to men in Christianity. **Our God.** 'Our' marks very beautifully the appropriation of the Divine Being as emphatically theirs, in distinction from the rejection of him by these godless men. 'God,' with no appropriating word, is a sign of weakness of faith; it may be proof of positive unbelief. **Into lasciviousness.** The word is used in 1 Peter 4: 3; 2 Peter 2: 7 ("filthy"); 2: 18 ("wantonness"). **Turning the grace.** How? The grace of God, undeserved favor manifested in forgiving sin for the sake of Christ, brings men into liberty (1 Peter 2: 16; Gal. 3: 13; 5: 1, 13)—that is, into freedom from the law viewed as something to be obeyed in order to be justified from the condemning power of conscience, and from the tyranny of passion. If one who professes to have come into such freedom has come into it, not in fact, but only in pretence, he will be in dan-

[1] See the Dean of Westminister on baptism.

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

5 Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that [1] the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt,

1 Many very ancient authorities read *Jesus*.

ger of surrendering himself all the more freely to the dominion of lust. This will be 'turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.' **Denying,** etc. In several manuscripts God (*θεόν*) is wanting. It is rejected by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Wescott and Hort. The Greek for 'Lord' (*δεσπότην*) is not the word which is commonly used where the English has '*Lord.*' Its original meaning is *Master*, and *despot.* Widely different in meaning from the Greek is this Greek word in English letters. Jesus Christ is a *loving Master*, not a *despot.* But is *Lord* (that is, *Master*) here applied to God the Father? or is it applied to Christ? In the New Testament it is in most cases used respecting the former. (Luke 2: 29; Acts 4: 24; Rev. 6: 10.) In 2 Peter 2: 1 it is applied to Christ. As Jude is here so much like Peter, it would seem that he, as well as Peter, must refer to Christ; but variations from Peter, as the use of *only* and the omission of *that brought them*, awaken uncertainty. If we translate *the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ*, which may be the correct rendering, *Master* would manifestly refer to God the Father. If we translate, which is allowable, *our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*, then *Master*, as well as *Lord* (*κύριον*) refers to Christ. 'Denying,' etc. See 1 John 2: 22. They denied Jesus Christ by a life of excess. Such a life was denial of Christ, since Christ himself was so pure. In words they may have professed to receive him, but probably their sentiments concerning Christ were as bad as their life. One may deny Christ by adding to him something which he is not, or by subtracting from him something which he is. Like his brothers, Jude lived some time without seeing and publicly acknowledging the Messianic claims of Jesus; but there is no evidence that, like these men, he denied the Lord, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.

5–7. Examples of God's Punitive Justice.

5. *First Example.* **Therefore** is an error of translation. It should be *but*, and **will** should be *desire*, thus: *But* I *desire* to put you, etc. Compare 2 Peter 1: 12. **Though,** etc—literally, *knowing this, as* knowing this. They already know the historical facts which he is about to give, and for that very reason he puts them in remembrance. **Once**—*once for all.* (Ver. 3.) **This.** Manuscripts favor the reading which means *all things*, and this is adopted in the Revised Version. They know, once for all, all things pertaining to God's revealed will, whether of the Old Testament, or of the New. **How that**—more simply, *that:* I desire to remind you *that*, etc. **The Lord**—God, the Father. But *Jesus* is another reading. "Some primitive error" would seem to have crept in. See Westcott and Hort. What is the correct reading it may never be possible to decide. In 1 Cor. 10: 4 is a representation of Christ, with which, to say the least, the reading *Jesus* is in harmony: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ." (Rev. Ver.) If Christ, in his pre-existent, divine nature, therefore as the Son of God, as the Word, who afterward appeared as man, accompanied the Israelites during their march through the wilderness, protecting and helping them (Meyer on 1 Cor. 10: 4), why may it not also be true that the deliverance of the people from Egypt, and the subsequent destruction of those that believed not, were effected by God through the medium of the same pre-existing Son? But the student will notice that, according to the suggested reading, Jude uses the name (*Jesus*) by means of which, as Huther says, is denoted the earthly, human personality of Christ. It may, indeed, be deemed contrary to all analogy of Scripture to ascribe to *Jesus*, rather than to Christ, or the Eternal Son, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, etc.; yet, as Huther himself says, Jude could have done this from the consciousness of identity of the Eternal Son and the Son of Mary. If the commonly-received reading is correct, *Lord* must probably be understood as referring to God the Father. **The people** — *a* people. There is no article in the Greek. Unconsciously, per-

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

6 [1] afterward destroyed them that believed not. And angels who kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the 7 great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the

1 Gr. *the second time.*

haps, the writer strikes a minor key by the omission of *his*. Compare Matt. 1: 21; Luke 1: 68; Rom. 11: 1 (*his* people). **Afterward**—*the second time.* The idea is this: That the Lord, having delivered the people out of the land of Egypt, the second time did not deliver, but destroyed them that believed not. The history shows that all but the young, and Joshua and Caleb, perished in the wilderness. Fronmüller interprets: "He destroyed them the second time, and should be referred to two judgments of destruction; once when the people, with the exception of a few, perished in the wilderness, and again to the Babylonish captivity," which seems to be more "forced" and "unnatural" than the explanation which he rejects. Notice here Jude's independence of Peter. He takes a new example. In the corresponding part of his Second Epistle, chapter 2, Peter says nothing of the kind, but takes an example from the history of the flood. **Believed not**—trusted not in their Divine Deliverer from Egypt, but murmured and fell into immorality. On the nature of faith, see on 1 Peter 1: 5, and respecting the word 'believe,' see on 1 Peter 1: 8. See also Heb. 3: 18, 19. This example of punishment is intended partly (ver. 20, 21), not wholly, as a warning to Christians. It is also intended to assure Christians that the immoral heretics will be punished. Thus it serves as an encouragement as well as a warning.

6. *Second example*, having the same object as the first. **Angels**—not *the* angels, a contrast with *men*, referred to in ver. 5; yet not all angels, for a limitation is made by the clause which follows. **First estate**—correctly, as in the Revised Version, *their own principality*. In the Greek there is but one word for *first estate*, and that meaning, literally, *what is first*, whether in time or place. Here it refers either to their original state, or their original position: if the former, it must mean their sinlessness and bliss; if the latter, their honor or dominion. Both may be included. Inquisitiveness would desire a more definite statement. Some poets, as Milton, Dante, Mrs. Browning, and others sing as if knowing much concerning such high things, but inspired men must be silent where it is permitted poets to strike the harp with a bold hand. Some who are not poets presume to know too much to believe that there are any angels whatever. **Kept not.** They could have kept; there was no compulsion. **But left.** They could have remained. 'But' left—not *and* left; and therefore this clause does not express another distinct act, but it defines the act expressed in the first clause. Yet it adds something to the thought, for the first is negative, while this is positive. **Their own habitation**—*their proper habitation.* The Greek for *their own* (ἑαυτῶν), before **first estate,** is not the same as here (ἴδιον), and it is desirable to indicate it by the use of a different word, as *proper*, though this term is a little ambiguous. By 'habitation,' heaven may be meant, perhaps the dwelling place especially theirs *in* heaven. If the latter is the meaning, the nature of the wrong here also is not described. Compare the corresponding 2 Peter 2: 4, where angels are said to have sinned. Though in Peter the representation is more general, it is more easily understood. Jude gives particulars, and for that very reason his meaning is less obvious. **Hath reserved**—*hath kept*, which brings out the contrast more clearly: they kept not; God has kept them. The perfect tense takes the readers back to the time of the wrong doing, and brings them forward to the writer's day. They have been kept through the entire period. **In everlasting chains under darkness.** Peter: *chains of darkness.* Jude adds the idea expressed in *everlasting.* Farrar, in harmony with his erroneous interpretation of 1 Peter 3: 19, 20, "preached unto the spirits in prison," makes 'everlasting' (ἀϊδίοις) express a limited period, though affirming, at the same time, that it is stronger than eternal or everlasting (αἰωνιος). The latter word occurs in the very important passage, Matt. 25: 46. The 'chains' (*bonds*) can never be broken; no restoration, therefore. 'Darkness,' of hell. (Matt. 25: 30, 41.) **The great day**—the day of general judgment, when the

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth [1]as an example, suffer-
8 ing the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like

1 Or, *as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment.*

fallen angels will be *publicly* judged. See "that great and notable day" (Acts 2: 20); "the great day of his wrath" (Rev. 6: 17); "that great day of God Almighty." (Rev. 16: 14.) A great number will be gathered together, a division will be made, and from that division great results will follow. (Matt. 25: 32, 33, 34, 41.) See on the entire corresponding 2 Peter 2: 4.

7. *Third example*, with the same object as that of the two previous ones. **As** is related to *likewise* in the next verse. The two words express comparison between the inhabitants of the cities and "these filthy dreamers." **Sodom and Gomorrah**—situated, as the evidence thus far obtained serves to show, in a district at the southern end of the Dead Sea, not, as a recent writer has attempted to prove, at the northern end. **The cities about** (*around*) **them**—Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. (Gen. 14: 2; Deut. 29: 23.) A comma should stand after *them*, but none after *manner*, which should be closely connected with the following clause. As in the Revised Version, *with these* should have appeared in the Common Version (the proper rendering of the Greek word τούτοις in the text). *In like manner with these*—that is, the inhabitants of Gomorrah, etc., gave themselves over to fornication in the manner like that which characterized these. But who are meant by *these* is uncertain. Some say Sodom and Gomorrah, but these are included with the other cities in the sin. Others, as Farrar, refer it to the angels (ver. 6), but that rests on a false interpretation of Gen. 6: 1, 2—that the sons of God who took daughters of men for wives were angels. But, according to Farrar, Jude himself, "like the Jews of his day, attributed the fall of the angels to sensuality." Others refer it to the false teachers (ver. 4) mentioned also in ver. 8 as "these filthy dreamers." If the latter is the true reference, Jude anticipates what he is about to say, which is deemed by some as inadmissible. It is a question not easily decided, but the latter reference seems to be preferable. **Giving themselves over**—one word in the Greek, but a word of such strength that more than one word in the English is necessary to express the idea. It implies a thorough and continued abandonment to lust. **And** (yet more) **going** (*away*) **after.** They went fearfully out of the right way. **Strange.** "The Greek," says Dr. Lillie, "occurs ninety-eight times, but it is nowhere else translated 'strange.'" They went after *other* flesh. The disgusting forms of licentiousness here referred to are mentioned in Gen. 19: 4, 5; Lev. 18: 22, 23; Rom. 1: 24, 26, 27; and no facts of history are more strongly attested than that they greatly prevailed in Rome and Greece. There is reason to believe that almost the entire heathen world were sunk in similar pollution at the time of Christ's birth. Would that such painful proofs of the fall of man could not be gathered from Christian countries! **Are set forth.** The original is striking: *lie before*—that is, lie before our eyes. Compare with 2 Peter 2: 6 ("making them an ensample"). *To lie before* is explained by Fronmüller thus: "The Dead Sea is to this day a testimony of that catastrophe; ruins of the sunken cities were perhaps still visible in the days of Jude." [!] But Bengel says: "The cities, therefore, were situated, not *in* the Dead Sea, but *upon* the shore." Even Huther speaks of the Dead Sea as "continually testifying to the punishment inflicted." De Wette, in Fronmüller, says that "subterranous fire is presumed [!] to be beneath the sea that covers the cities." To the notion, so common, that the cities stood where the Dead Sea is, the Scriptures give no support, and geological considerations lead to the belief that the Dead Sea must have had existence long before the time of Abraham. In the destruction of the cities the Scriptures assign no agency to water, but attribute their overthrow to fire; and unless scientific investigation shall show it to be otherwise, the view must continue to be held that the district on the south of the Dead Sea bears marks which corroborate the theory that that is the spot where the cities stood. The cities lie before us *in history*. **For an example.** Some connect with *eternal fire* (*as an example of eternal fire*). So the mar-

8 Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.
9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst

manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at
9 [1]dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of

1 Gr. *glories.*

ginal reading of the Revised Version. It is better to connect with 'set forth.' The next clause expresses what the *men* who inhabited the cities are suffering in the other world. **The vengeance** (or *punishment*) **of eternal fire**—the fire of hell, and this they have been suffering from the time of the first visitation of divine wrath. See on 2 Peter 2: 6.

8–16. The False Teachers Described.

8. **Likewise,** connecting with "*as*" in ver. 7, introduces comparison of the dreamers of this verse with the sinners of that verse. But again our translators fail to translate. In the Greek is a word meaning *nevertheless*, and this indicates the failure of the false teachers to profit by the example lying before them in the destruction of the cities. *Yet* (in like manner) *do also these*, etc. **Filthy**—unnecessarily supplied, in italics. **Dreamers**—literally, *dreaming*. The word stands in close relation to both the clauses that follow, but they are not represented as doing three distinct and co-ordinate things: 1. Dreaming; 2. Defiling the flesh and despising dominion; 3. Speaking evil of dignities. They are in a state which is represented as *dreaming*, and while in that state or being in that state, they do the things specified. Of these men as *dreaming* different views have been taken. All explanations which assume that dreaming in sleep is intended are to be rejected. It must be taken as a figurative word intended to express baseless, incoherent imaginings with respect to religious things, and which are unworthy the name of principles. **Defile the flesh**—of others and of themselves. It has its explanation in the fearful description of the cities. (Ver. 7.) See a similar description in Isa. 56: 10, 11. **Despise dominion**—the same thought as Peter expresses in 2 Peter 2: 10, but the verbs are not the same, Jude's being the stronger. **Speak evil of dignities**—the same in Peter. See on the entire parallel verse. This verse might be deemed a remarkably correct description of Mormonism.

9. **Yet** (*but*) introduces the great contrast in respect to one point, between the false teachers and Michael the archangel. That one point is the spirit shown by the former relative to earthly rulers, and by the latter to the devil. The particulars here given are not even hinted at by any other inspired writer; and it is said by those who have examined it, that they are not to be found in the book of Henoch. (Ver. 14.) To suppose that the facts were unknown to all others, and were given to Jude by the Holy Spirit through direct revelation, is inadmissible. It is clear that they were received by the Jews generally. Paul (2 Tim. 3: 8) makes use of a fact relative to Jannes and Jambres, and it is specially to be noticed that it pertains to Moses before death, as the case before us pertains to Moses (to his body) after death, but of which fact also the other Scriptures take no notice. It has been shown from an examination of some Egyptian names as quite probable, that what Paul says of Jannes and Jambres was an actual fact, and in the absence of proof to the contrary it must be held that Jude also gives us actual facts, though we have not the means of verifying them. But it should never be forgotten that all the inspired writers were kept by inspiration as well from errors of fact as from errors of doctrine. **Michael.** To only two of the angels do the Scriptures give names. Michael and Gabriel. Michael is mentioned in Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1; Rev. 12: 7. It was a Jewish name (1 Chron. 5: 13, and many other places), and means, *who is like God.* The division of angels into classes, as angels and archangels, is not recognized in the earlier history of the Jews. We read first in Daniel of "one of the *chief* princes" (Michael). In Rev. 12: 7, he is the leader of other angels ("Michael and *his* angels"). Jude calls him 'archangel,' and Paul speaks of an archangel. (1 Thess. 4: 16.) An archangel is a chief, or prince, angel. **Contending**—in words. **With the devil**—a loyal angel in contest with a rebel angel, a prince angel in contest with the prince demon, the subject of the dispute being the body of Moses. The detail of the dispute is wisely hidden from us. Study the revealed, instead of prying into the unre-

not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.
10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.
11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judg-
10 ment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they [1]destroyed.
11 Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and [2]ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire,

1 Or, *corrupted*.....2 Or, *cast themselves away through*.

vealed. "Origen says that the allusion is taken from an apocryphal book called 'The Ascension of Moses.'" (Farrar, "Early Days of Christianity.") It must be admitted that Jude may here be using a Jewish legend. As an illustration he might have used it with as much propriety as Paul used, for illustration, quotations from heathen writers. It is a matter concerning which one need not be very confident. **Durst not**—not through want of courage. (Rev. 12: 7-9.) Moral considerations restrained him. He stood in holy awe of God. "Why dared not?" asks Farrar. "The entire reasoning shows that the answer is: 'Because of Satan's former greatness.'" **Railing accusation**—*a judgment* or *sentence* of reviling; that is, a judgment containing words of railing, and implying undue severity of spirit and assumption of power. Though severe, this Epistle of Jude is not a railing accusation. Jude is not, then, to be unfavorably contrasted with Michael. Had it been the archangel's business to blow the alarm against these 'filthy dreamers,' it would not have been like him to use less vigor (*fortiter in re*, courageously) than Jude. **The Lord rebuke thee.** (Zech. 3: 1-3.) Compare this verse with 2 Peter 2: 11. The similarities and the dissimilarities are striking. Peter is the more general; Jude the more particular.

10. These—the false teachers. **But** gives additional contrast between them and Michael, while the verse as a whole stands related to ver. 8. There the errorists are said to 'speak evil of dignities'; here not to know that of which they speak; there to defile the flesh; here in that lower knowledge, which they have in common with brutes, to corrupt themselves. **Those things**—*whatsoever things*, things pertaining to dignities. (Ver. 8.) See on the parallel phrase in 2 Peter 2: 12. Licentiousness, since it is itself lawless, disqualifies for attaining just knowledge of government. This kind of knowledge requires a clear head and an honest heart, and these men have neither. **But,** on the other hand, **what** (*whatsoever*) **they know naturally.** There is a lower kind of knowledge, connected with indulgence of the appetites, in which they are proficients, but it is brute knowledge.

> What is a man,
> If his chief good, and market of his time,
> Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.

The false teachers do worse than to "sleep and feed"—they corrupt themselves, and by so doing, *destroy* themselves. Slow suicide (not always slow) is the result of such beastliness. Shortness of life in animals is natural; in animalized man it is both natural and unnatural. Compare with Peter, and note here also the similarity and the dissimilarity.

11. Woe—a denunciation often used by Christ against hypocrites, seldom by apostles against any. In some cases it expresses grief; here, merited punishment. Cain, Balaam, and Core—three representative men, murderer, false prophet, and rebel, alike in that they were depraved, but different in the form of their depravity. **Have gone**—*went.* **In the way**—figuratively, *manner of life.* "This allusion to Christ is obviously" [*not*] "to the Cain of Jewish Hagadoth" [legends], but to the Cain of Genesis. "St. Jude can hardly be charging these teachers with murder" (Farrar), which may be true, and he not allude to a Jewish legend. See Farrar's "Early Days of Christianity," Excursus V. 6. To refer it to the murder would be too specific, but Cain was a man of excessive self-assurance, which drove him to reject God's method of justification, and at length to a most fearful outburst of passion. In these respects the false teachers were like him. **Balaam.** See on the parallel 2 Peter 2: 15, and on ver. 6. **Ran greedily**—*rushed on;* stronger than Peter's "following the way." **The error**—his covetous life, including all the defects and sins to which it would naturally lead. The love of money is a "root of *all evil.*" (1 Tim. 6: 10.) **A reward**—*hire;* connect with

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear:

12 and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are [1]hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without

1 Or, *spots.*

'Balaam,' a condensed way of saying that his error (his covetousness, etc.) had a reward ("wages," 2 Peter) for its end. In this respect the false teachers were like Balaam. **Core**—in the Old Testament, Korah, after the Hebrew. *Core* (two syllables) is in conformity with the Greek *Kore.* It means *baldness.*[1] Korah headed a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. He was dissatisfied that he was not put into the priest's office. (Num. 16.) **Gainsaying**—(derived from "against" and "say")—*contradiction.* See a specimen of it in Num. 16: 3, but his entire rebelliousness was a contradiction against Moses and Aaron, and against God. Compare Heb. 12: 3, and for the translation *gainsaying*, see Rom. 10: 21. **Perished.** Jude conceives them as having finished their course (*finished*, how differently from Paul's! 2 Tim. 4: 7); so certain is the terrible end. The false teachers are like Korah, inasmuch as their spirit and life are a contradiction to the truth revealed by God and taught by the apostles.

12. These points them out as in ver. 10. By a series of five metaphors—spots, dry clouds, autumnal trees, wild waves, wandering stars—the description is continued. Each metaphor is sharpened by means of additional words or phrases, all which combined constitute a specimen of invective as powerful, probably, as is to be found in Greek or Roman oratory. Apart from divine teaching, Jude is here seen to be a man of more than common ability both in thinking and in the art of expression. The false teachers. **Spots**—or, "rocks in the sea," Thayer "Lex"; "hidden rocks," Revised Version. That the false teachers are rocks in the feasts of charity may mean either that on these rocks the feasts of charity are wrecked (their usefulness as means of improvement), or that the false teachers aim to ruin others.

NOTE.—By taking into the text the article (οἱ), found in many manuscripts, and accepted by Tregelles, Tischendorf, Lachmann, and Westcott and Hort, as the true reading, we have: *These are they who are rocks;* or, *these are they, who, rocks in your feasts, feast together.* The former seems preferable. The Vulgate Version made the mistake of using *maculæ* (spots), the English Roman Catholic Version (Douay), translated from the Vulgate, has *spots*, and King James' translation has the same. 2 Peter 2: 13 has *spots*, but there the Greek is different. *Rocks*—that is, *hidden* rocks, is the meaning of the word used by Jude. It belongs to the literary singularities of Jude, that instead of using Peter's word (σπίλοι, spiloi), he should have rejected it, and used a word (σπιλάς, plural σπιλάδες, spilades) sounding very much like it, but having a different meaning.

Feasts of charity—*love-feasts;* one word in the original (ἀγάπαις). "These feasts were public banquets of a frugal kind, instituted by the early Christians, and connected by them with the Lord's Supper. The provisions were contributed by the more wealthy, and were common to all Christians, whether rich or poor, who chose to partake. Portions were also sent to the sick and absent members. These *agapae* were intended as an exhibition of mutual Christian affection; but they became subject to abuses, and were afterward discontinued." See 1 Cor. 11: 20–34, for proof of the disorder which crept into love-feasts, apart from the yet grosser perversions, which were made by the false teachers mentioned by Jude. The word agapae occurs only here. **When they feast**—in a reveling manner. **With you.** The others are not united with them in their disreputable conduct, but the explanation of their being together may be this, that the lawless men persisted in being present. Satan had been found among the sons of God before this, and such intrusions have not yet ceased. The love-feast does not seem to have been enjoined. Though it was a spontaneous outgrowth of Christian affection, yet, as an organic form of

[1] "The meaning of Korah's name (baldness) has supplied a ready handle to some members of the Church of Rome to banter Calvin (Calvinus, Calvus) as being homonymous with his predecessor in schism; and it has been retorted that Korah's baldness has a more suitable antitype in the tonsure of the Romish priests." (Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," p. 1575, note.)

clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;
13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice
13 dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out of their own [1]shame; wandering stars,

1 Gr. *shames.*

social life, its continued existence was not demanded by the spiritual necessities of believers. It is possible to countenance forms of social life in a church under expectation of strengthening church ties, which will have a much stronger tendency, by their unadaptedness to the spiritual nature of the renewed soul, to weaken them than to strengthen them. The purpose to obtain means to meet the current expenses of a church, or to aid a benevolent enterprise, has no tendency to sanctify a worldly way of doing it. One may steal the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. **Feeding themselves without fear.** The order of the Greek would justify the connection, *reveling together fearlessly.* It would therefore be confirmatory of the first clause of the verse. They were like the unjust judge, regarding neither God nor man. (Luke 18: 4.) Though in this case no terrifying handwriting appeared on the wall (Dan. 5: 5, 25), yet "the terror of the Lord" was not to be delayed forever.

> But 'tis not so above:
> There is no shuffling, there the action lies
> In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled
> Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
> To give in evidence.

Compare 2 Peter 2: 13, last half of the verse, and see comments. 'Feeding themselves.' See 1 Peter 5: 2, 3, and comments. It is the second confirmation of *rocks in your love-feasts*, and at the same time it strengthens the clause immediately preceding. They should feed others; they should supply the wants of the poorer members, and look after the Lord's flock in general, instead of which they aim to gratify their own sensual nature. Reveling together and feeding themselves! Self-pampering ministers will quail before the "great white throne." **Clouds without water.** Peter says (2 Peter 2: 17) "*wells* without water." See the comments. It is another instance of likeness and variation. This metaphor, as aptly as Peter's, expresses the character of the false teachers. Such men can give forth no refreshing, fructifying influence, and that for the reason that they have no spiritual life. Without divine interposition nothing but sterility can be expected. **Carried about**—*driven along;* a touch of the pencil to give deeper shading to the picture. **Trees,** etc. More correctly, *late autumnal trees.* "These deceivers are likened by the apostle" [?] "to trees as they show in late autumn, when foliage and fruit alike are gone." (Trench, Common Version.) See Liddell and Scott on the meaning of the original, and Lillie on the passage. **Without fruit**—as fruit trees are in late autumn. **Twice dead**—thoroughly dead; not, as Stier says, "dead first by the fall, and a second time because they have been regenerated"; not, as Wordsworth, "dead first by nature, and then raised to life *in baptism*, relapsed"; not, as Alford, "dead like a tree in the apparent death of winter, and like some trees, really dead"; not, as Huther, "fruitless, but, also, really dead." The men give no evidence of having ever been regenerated. The relapse of regenerated men continued through the earthly life is not taught by Christ, or his apostles. **Plucked up by the roots**—because thoroughly dead. They are beyond the possibility of coming into spiritual life. A tree drawn out from the fat soil, and lying stretched upon the earth, with its roots in the sun, awaiting the axe, and the fire of the hearth, is a fearful emblem. The last stage (the *burning*) —concerning that, Jude is silent. But a hint of it, under another metaphor, is given in the next verse.

13. Raging (*wild*) **waves of the sea.** They are as restless in their passions as the wild waves of the sea, pouring forth their own shames like foam. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (Isa. 57: 20.) **Shame** (or, *shames*, Rev. Ver.), like most of the nouns in 1 Peter 4: 3, expresses the different *forms* of shame. It is not the feeling of shame, not the outward reproach, which is meant, but *shameful deeds*, as in 2 Cor. 4: 2 ("the hidden things of dishonesty," of *shame*); Phil. 3: 19 ("whose

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,

for whom the blackness of darkness hath been 14 reserved for ever. And to these also Enoch, the

glory is in their *shame*"). **Wandering stars**—perhaps comets, possibly meteors. Though the orbits of comets can be calculated, and though these bodies are as regular in their motion as the planets, yet, compared with the latter, whose orbits are more nearly circular and apparently more regular, they might properly be called 'wandering.' Whatever the bodies, the metaphor is well adapted to express the irregularity of these men's lives, compared with the regularity of the Christian's life. *Fixed* stars in the moral heavens are in striking contrast with '*wandering* stars.' **To whom**—*for whom*, etc. Precisely the same in the Greek as in 2 Peter 2: 17, though there the English is less forcible by the use of "mist." **The blackness of darkness**—though the nouns are not alike in the original, they are equivalent to *the darkness of darkness*—that is, the intensest darkness. This is the end to which these wandering stars, these base men, are destined. As they themselves are darkness, and will be darkness forever, the darkness which is reserved for them must be eternal, and is therefore a *positive infliction*.

14, 15. Here Jude is independent of all the New Testament writers. **Also**—connect with *these*. **Of** (*to*) **these** 'also'; *concerning* them. According to ver. 4, these men were objects of ancient prophecy. **Enoch**—the man who walked with God. (Gen. 5: 22.) He was father of Methusaleh. The English spelling in 1 Chron. 1: 1 is *Henoch* (Ἑνωχ). **The seventh from Adam**—seventh in the series, Adam being reckoned as the first. There were five between Adam and Enoch. (Gen. 5: 1-18.) The prophecy is not to be found in the Old Testament. In 1773 A. D. much interest was awakened among Christian scholars by the discovery of manuscripts containing an Ethiopic translation of the book of Henoch. It was known before that such a book had been in circulation, for it is mentioned by several of the Fathers. The translation was made, probably, from the Greek "toward the middle or close of the fourth century." It is believed by some to have been written first in Hebrew. Its preparation is put between 144 B. C. and 120 B. C., in the interval between the close of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. There is no reason to believe that it was written by Enoch, the father of Methusaleh, but, as it bore his name, it would, of course, be referred to, when reference was necessary, as the book of Henoch. That is the sense in which Jude speaks of the prophesying as Henoch's, and inasmuch as the name *Henoch* is the title of the book, it was natural for Jude to remind his readers that the Henoch whose name the book bore was the seventh from Adam. Another view may be better: The book itself uses the designation, 'the seventh from Adam,' and the tradition also may have included the phrase, and therefore Jude need not be supposed to make this as his own original assertion. It is not certain, though it is probable, that Jude quotes from the book itself. He may have attained a knowledge of the saying, "Behold the Lord cometh," etc., from tradition. The book professes to be a series of revelations from God to Enoch and Noah relative to the Messiah and his kingdom, and though not a part of the Bible, yet it said by Brooke Foss Westcott ("Introd. to the Study of the Gospels," p. 117): "No apocryphal book is more remarkable for eloquence and poetic vigor, and the range of subjects which it includes is as noble as its style." This cannot be an all-pervading characteristic, for Fronmüller speaks of its "absurd fancies and its coarse notions of the heavenly world," and of its "clumsy fabrications" in contrast with "the chasteness and truth of our canonical writings." To show more clearly the great superiority of the Sacred Scriptures—of this Epistle of Jude—over the book of Henoch, it may not be amiss to quote from Fronmüller yet further, in illustration of what he says concerning the character of the book: "In the book we read, for example, of the giants, or tyrants, mentioned in Gen. 6, that 'the women with whom the angels had intercourse conceived and brought forth great giants, six thousand feet in height. These ate up all the produce of men, until men were unable to sustain them any longer.'"

Jude speaks of Henoch as *prophesying* because it is that which the author of the book,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all
that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly
deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all
their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken
against him.
16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after

seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold,
the Lord came with [1]ten thousands of his holy ones,
15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the
ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which
they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard
things which ungodly sinners have spoken against
16 him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking

1 Gr. *his holy myriads.*

and, by supposition, tradition also, ascribes to him. Though *seven* was deemed in ancient times as a very significant number, yet no special importance should be attached to it here. **Behold** calls special attention. The entire passage, with a little variation, is found in the Ethiopic translation. (Fronmüller.) **The Lord cometh** (*came*). The seer conceives the event as already accomplished. It is the style prophetic. The reference is to the Day of Judgment. *How* the Lord will come is to be learned from the Lord himself, speaking through Luke in his report of what the angels said to the apostles, as they stood gazing into heaven at the time of the ascension: "This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." (Acts 1: 11, Revised Version.) He went visibly and through the air; and that is the way in which he will come. The only other possible interpretation is that which makes the angels declare that he will as *certainly* come as he went. Such a view excludes reference to the *manner* of coming. But in several other passages the same words, here translated *in like manner*, convey more than the idea of certainty of occurrence. (Acts 1: 11.) *So . . . in like manner* (Οὕτως . . . ὃν τρόπον). Compare *In the manner like to these* (τὸν ὅμοιον τούτοις), ver. 7. Bengel: "He shall come in a visible manner, in a cloud with a trumpet, with a retinue, and perhaps in the same place." Meyer: "In a cloud. Compare Matt. 24: 30." Lechler (Lange): "Visibly and in glory." Hackett: "Visibly and in the air. The expression is never employed to affirm merely the certainty of one event as compared with another. The assertion that the meaning is simply that, as Christ had departed, so also he would return, is contradicted by every passage in which the phrase occurs. See Acts 7: 28; Matt. 23: 37; Luke 13: 34; 2 Tim. 3: 8."

Saints—*holy ones;* literally, as in the margin of the Revised Version, "*his holy myriads,*" angels, and the elect. Compare Deut. 33: 2; Zech. 14: 5; Heb. 12: 22; Rev. 5: 11. **To execute judgment**—either to sentence, or to apply the sentence by punishment. **All**—all the wicked. **To convince**—*to convict;* in John 16: 8, "*to reprove.*" A word having a stronger meaning (to rebuke sharply) stands as the commonly accepted reading; the milder word is more strongly attested. **Ungodly**—remarkable repetition, the word being used four times. In the last instance but one, it is a verb (*committed in an ungodly manner*). **Ungodly deeds**—literally, *deeds of ungodliness.* **Hard speeches.** The latter word is properly supplied, or, better, as in the Revised Version, *things.* Compare John 6: 60.

> And 'tis a kind of good deed to say well:
> And yet words are no deeds.

These men had none of Cardinal Wolsey's "well saying." Their ungodly deeds and their hard words had a terrible consistency. Satan in Eden and Judas in Gethsemane clothed ungodly deeds in *soft* words. **Against him**—against the Lord, probably Christ. The Judge is one "that no king can corrupt." How crushing, in the next life, must be the weight of one word uttered, without repentance, against such a One as Christ!

16. Jude's description is not ended. **These,** the false teachers, and, as in ver. 10, 12, standing first. It is as if Jude's finger were still pointing them out. **Murmurers**—against every good thing. Silent respecting the objects of their murmuring, Jude seems to give us the right to lay upon them an indefinite load. Compare 1 Peter 4: 9 ("grudging," murmuring), and see comments. **Complainers**—against every good thing; against all who do not side with them in error and vice, against every providence which conflicts with their selfish ends. Habitual complaining is a very egotistic vice, for the habitual complainer is a habitual proclaimer of his own wisdom. Christ *opened not his mouth* in complaint

their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.
17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts
19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*), shewing respect of persons for the sake of advantage.
17 But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord
18 Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after [1]their
19 own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations, [2]sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye,

1 Gr. *their own lusts of ungodliness*.....2 Or, *natural*; or, *animal*.

against the most cruel treatment; and, in illustration of Paul's freedom from the vice of these men, see Phil. 4: 11, 12. These men would have yoked well with modern pessimists.

My crown is called content;
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.

Walking after their own lusts—their egotism the spirit, their lusts the rule. Compare 1 Peter 4: 3 with comments, and 2 Peter 3: 3. **Great swelling words.** Compare 2 Peter 2: 18, and see comments. The representation is the same. They indulge in flattering admiration of the rich and of any others of whom they think it possible to reap some gain.

Oh, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have.

As God looks down from his infinite height on men, both princes and subjects, both rich and poor, look alike in stature, as trees look alike in height when seen by men from a mountain's top.

17–23. Concluding Exhortations.

17, 18. The description of the false teachers being ended, the readers are exhorted to remember that the coming of such men was announced by the apostles. **But, beloved, remember ye.** 'Ye' stands first in the Greek, making a strong contrast between the readers and the wicked men just described. *Beloved.* See the same form of address in ver. 3. To say that Jude here shows the tender side of his nature might be an unjust implication, for the severity of the language just used is not certain evidence of natural severity of spirit. Different characters require different treatment. **The apostles**—not decisive proof that Jude himself was not an apostle, but if he was not one, a natural manner of expression. **Spoken before of** (*by*)—referring to time, but also expressing the idea of prophetic speaking. Preachers will, in this respect, be most like apostles, if they *speak*, instead of being silent, concerning errorists. **How,** used in the Revised Version, as well as in the Common Version, is superfluous. **Should be**—*will be.* **Mockers**—*scoffers*, as in 2 Peter 3: 3. **Last time.** See on 1 Peter 1: 5. **Who should walk**—*walking.* **Ungodly lusts**—literally, *according to their own lusts of ungodliness.* From ungodliness as bad soil grew lusts which were a legitimate product of such soil.

19. Once more, as in ver. 10, 12, 16, Jude uses the significant **these.** The description is again opened. With one more touch of the divine pencil the terrible portrait will be finished—to be hung up in the gallery of false and immoral teachers as a warning in all the coming ages of the Church. Nothing, therefore, must be left undone which may be necessary to give a true likeness. **Separate themselves.** The pronoun has feeble support in manuscripts, and is omitted by the critics. They separate from the church in their inner life, and the inference may be made that they will separate by-and-by in their outward life. See 1 John 2: 19. Or it may mean that they produce separation—that is, make schisms in the church. Schism produced by false doctrines, unscriptural rites, and immoral practices has been the bane of Christendom. The seceding body has not by any means in all cases been the schismatic body. The body from which the secession was made has in some very important instances been the heretical body, and therefore schism could not be justly charged upon the seceders. A church history impartially illustrative of this is yet in the future. Re-union in support of what the Scriptures teach, and in the manifestation of the divine life, is an object for which unremitting prayer should be offered by the Lord's people of every name. **Sensual.** The English scarcely has an equiv-

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy
21 faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord
22 Jesus Christ unto eternal life. [1]And on some have

1 The Greek text in this passage (*And . . . fire*) is somewhat uncertain. Some ancient authorities read *And some refute while they dispute with you.*

alent for the Greek. 'Sensual' is not exact. *Natural* is used in 1 Cor. 15: 44, 46; 1 Cor. 2 14. In James 3: 15 'sensual' is used. *Psychical* (Greek in English spelling) has been used, but to most persons it conveys the meaning no more clearly than the Greek word itself, and *animal* is not exact. 'Sensual' perhaps comes most nearly to the sense of the original. The false teachers surrendered their spirit life to animal life. **Having not the Spirit.** The Greek has no article. Some are very positive that the Holy Spirit is meant, while others think that contrast between two characteristics, the sensual and the spiritual, is intended; they have abandoned themselves so thoroughly to their lower nature that they can scarcely be said to have any spirit at all. Which is the correct view it is difficult to say. Both the Common Version and the Revised Version begin the word with a capital, indicating reference to the Holy Spirit.

20, 21. But contrasts the errorists with others. **Faith**—that which is external to them, as in ver. 3—namely, the entire Christian scheme, distinguished by its leading characteristic. **Most holy**—"than which," says Bengel, "none can be holier." Holy—sensual; echoes from opposite worlds. **Building up . . . on.** Faith, then, is their foundation. Building implies growth (2 Peter 3: 18), and building on the faith implies stability. (Heb. 12: 28.) 'Building up *yourselves*' implies activity (Phil. 2: 12), but not independent and self-righteous activity. (Phil. 2: 13.) They are "*God's* building" (1 Cor. 3: 9); they are "built up" *in Christ* (Col. 2: 7); they are a "*spiritual* house." (1 Peter 2: 5.) **Praying in the Holy Ghost**—in the Holy Spirit as *the personal sphere in which* they pray. Compare Rom. 8: 26, 27. The Spirit is the awakening and directing power. (Huther.) **Keep yourselves,** etc. The main direction, and both the participial clauses of ver. 20, are subordinate to 'keep'—that is, they express conditions. To keep themselves in the love of God they must (1) build themselves on their most holy faith, and (2) pray in the Holy Spirit. Keeping themselves is another illustration of human activity, but, as in building up themselves, not an independent activity. (John 17: 11; 1 Peter 1: 5.) Conscious weakness appropriates divine strength, and the appropriation impels to activity. **In the love of God**—*in love to God*, supposed to be awakened in their hearts by God himself. The reasonableness of this command one need not stop to prove; its reasonableness is *felt* by the loving spirit. Love "hath a syllogistic power." Keep yourselves in love to God. Love, then, is not an evanescent power; it is not a periodical power. Jude is here John-like. (1 John 4: 7-12.) Love must have truth for fuel. Hence the Johannean saying: "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." (1 John 2: 5.) Keeping the word—keeping ourselves in love, a beautiful connection. **Looking for** implies *waiting for.* They are to wait for that **mercy** which Christ will show at his second coming. (Titus 2: 13.) See 1 John 2: 28. This is given as a continually flowing result of keeping themselves in the love of God. **Unto eternal life** is not to be connected, as by Fronmüller, with 'mercy,' but possibly with 'keep yourselves'; more probably with the nearest participle, 'looking for.' They are to look for (await) 'unto eternal life.' 'Mercy,' so often elsewhere ascribed to God, is here ascribed to Jesus Christ. The writers of the epistles were entirely free from scruples relative to identifying the attributes of the Father and the attributes of Christ. 'Eternal life'—life which will have no end (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*). These words in the Greek are the same as are found in Matt. 25: 46. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into *life eternal.*" They are also used by Paul in Rom. 2: 7: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, *eternal life*" (*i. e.*, God *will render* eternal life). The effort to divest the adjective (as is done by Farrar, "Early Days of Christianity," note on the word in ver. 7) of the idea of endlessness of duration has

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:
23 And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

23 mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
24 Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his

proved a failure. Had the effort proved successful, the endlessness of future bliss would have been equally disproved.

22, 23. Here the writer turns the readers from the duty of attending to their own spiritual state to the course which they should pursue toward other members of the church, who are more or less in danger of being influenced by the false teachers. What is the correct reading is uncertain, and there is no probability that it will ever be known, so different are the manuscripts from one another. According to the best judgment that can be formed, it consists of three clauses, and these are rendered by the American Committee of Revisers: *And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating*, etc. According to a different reading adopted by Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, but not taken into the text by Westcott and Hort, the rendering might be: *Convict them while they dispute or contend with you.* Three classes of persons are specified, and different modes of treating them are enjoined. (Huther.) *Doubting; who are in doubt;* not, as the Common Version, **making a difference.** See Acts 10: 20; 11: 12; Rom. 14: 23; James 1: 6. Doubting is the offspring of unbelief, and unbelief may be the child of doubt. Those belonging to this class are to be *convicted* (by rebuking them). Exhortation will not suffice. They are not immoral like the false teachers; do not hold positive errors; they doubt, and are therefore given to disputing. Rebuking may restore; it may not. The duty must be done, even though with the possibility of no good result. **And others save**—put in contrast with the preceding. Whether Jude considers them in a worse condition is not clear. At any rate, an effort must be made to 'save' them. If 'save' is emphatic, it seems to leave the first named persons in a critical state—that is, as if their recovery, to say the least, were uncertain. **Pulling** (*snatching*), etc., shows how it is to be done, with intensity of effort. **Out of the fire**—whether the fire of hell (ver. 7; 2 Peter 3: 7) or their present state of ruin, is uncertain. The latter, as leading to the former, may be meant. The third class ('and on some,' see above) appears to be the worst of all, which may be inferable from the clause, 'hating even the garment,' etc., though the clause is not decisive. Yet they are not to be neglected. **Have compassion**—*mercy;* engage in merciful efforts, even on their behalf. **With fear.** They are to aim to do them good in the spirit of fear—that is, in fear lest they themselves be harmed by the contact necessary in the pitying effort to do them good. **Garment spotted by the flesh**—used figuratively for the corruption in which the men of this class have clothed themselves. That corruption as seen in their habits of life, might communicate itself to the very best of men. Hate it, therefore. Let it not work your harm. The garment alluded to was worn by the Jew next the skin. That such moral impurity may work out, and as it were clothe a man's very body, making it almost dangerous to attempt to do him good, is one of the most humiliating facts in the moral history of mankind.

24, 25. The Doxology.

24. Now (δέ) is not a "mere particle of transition." It puts in some contrast with the classes just named those who have remained steadfast. **Unto him that is able** (Rom. 16: 25). This points to the ground of all true hope. Jude makes no weakening addition, such as echoes back from the walls of many a prayer room. God's ability to keep us from falling is not conditioned upon our perseverance. Our perseverance, in other words, is conditioned, not upon our tremulous will, but upon God's ability. Oh, that we might be so conscious of our weakness as to be also conscious of resting only upon God's omnipotence! **To keep**—*to guard.* **Falling**—*stumbling.* The original word was applied to the stumbling of a horse. (Robinson.) Here it expresses moral fault. God is able to keep us from striking against anything which will cause us to fall —that is, to lose our faith, our loyalty to him, our soundness in the truth, our spirituality, and consequently eternal life. **To pre-**

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

25 glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and [1] for evermore. Amen.

1 Gr. *unto all the ages.*

sent—*to set*, to cause to stand. (Acts 6: 6.) **Faultless**—literally, *without blemish*, as a lamb. See 1 Peter 1: 19, and comments. Thus God is able to make us at length like that spotless Lamb who suffered for us. Infinite ability secures a glorious end. **His glory**—God's essential gloriousness. How it is manifested to those who are in heaven, only those who are in heaven can fully know! It is possible that the invisible God will be represented by some remarkable luminousness answering to the "glory" (the bright cloud) which appeared to the Israel of former times; but it is probable that the glorified Saviour, as the centre of the heavenly society, will answer to the luminous cloud. Very rich and confirmatory of our faith is that closing petition of the high-priestly prayer: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am: *that they may behold my glory*, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17; 24.) It is possible to see so much of the glory of Christ, even here in the vastness and orderliness and unity of the material universe, in human history, in his own sinlessness and wisdom, and in the moral uplifting of man by the efficacy of his death as sometimes at once to prostrate the soul in unwonted humility, and fill it with unwonted praise. **With (*in*) exceeding joy** (*exultation*). There is but one word in the original, and that is a word of exceeding strength. Compare Luke 1: 14; Acts 2: 46. God is able to set us perfect before the presence of his glory in exultant joy. (1 Peter 4: 13.) The joy is ours. **Wise** (σοφῳ) is wanting in so many manuscripts, that it cannot be deemed genuine. It is rejected by the ablest critics. It is genuine in Rom. 16: 27. **Only.** The writer is not contrasting God with Christ considered as the WORD who was in the beginning, was with God, and was God, but with the gods of the heathen, who, being false gods, had no existence. The Old Testament is pervaded with the sentiment that there is but *one* God, but the sentiment is in every case expressed with reference to the many gods of the heathen. See ver. 4; John 5: 44. **Our Saviour.** God the Father is our Saviour in the general sense of having made provision for our salvation. But it is "*through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (as appears from the correct text as translated in the Revised Version), as the Mediator between God and man, that glory, etc., must be ascribed to the only God. 'Lord.' See 1 Peter 1: 3 with comments, 2 Peter 1: 8. Thus Jude is in harmony with Peter relative to the propriety of applying the term *Lord* to Jesus. The propriety of such application has been unequivocally denied. **Be** is inserted in the Common Version and in the Revision, but whether the writer is expressing a *wish* is uncertain. The question is briefly considered on 1 Peter 1: 3. (Buttmann, § 129, p. 137, thinks "the indicative ἐστιν [is], decidedly deserves the preference." **Glory**, etc. The doxology is full. Nowhere else in the New Testament are found combined in a doxology these four words: 'glory, majesty, dominion, and power.' The first and the third are often used. (1 Peter 4: 11.) By **majesty** is meant *greatness*. The glory, greatness, dominion, and power of God! While we strive to *comprehend* them, and fail to do so, we should praise our Creator for making us, unlike the most sagacious of the animals, able to *apprehend the fact* of their existence. There is a sense in which agnosticism is a lie; there is a sense in which it is a truth. The animals are the only perfect agnostics; and this is easily explained —they know as little of themselves as of God. After 'power' should be inserted, *before all time* (πρὸ παντὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος), for which there is sufficient manuscript authority. Thus Jude sweeps from the eternity past, through the *now* of the earthly period to the eternity to come (*for evermore*). See on **Amen** in 1 Peter 4: 11.

Thus sublimely ends this brief but remarkable Epistle. It is unique in thought and expression, yet receives little attention from the pulpit and the private Christian. Not less certainly is it needed by the Christian

world of to-day than it was needed by those who lived in the time of Jude; and it will continue to be needed as long as the world stands. It should be more frequently used as a means of instruction and warning. Error and immorality, still greatly prevalent, should be resisted in their beginnings.

> A little fire is quickly trodden out:
> Which, being suffered, rivers cannot quench.

In some parts of Christendom to-day error is more insinuating than in the times of Jude. It is more insinuating because clothed in the garb of purity and charity. "How can that be error," it is asked, "which is taught by men of acknowledged excellence?"—a question which is itself born of error, for it is the rationalistic method of inquiry. History shows that serious errors have been taught by men the genuineness of whose Christian character cannot be doubted. Though the science of Biblical interpretation was never so exact in some quarters as it is to-day, yet a principle of interpretation is seeking a recognition which leaves no common ground for Christian men—the principle that the Bible must be explained by one's spiritual consciousness. Such a standard is too variable to be safe; and, if generally adopted, error would multiply more rapidly than ever. It must be confessed, however, notwithstanding this feature of the times, that the union of error with immorality still continues in such a degree as to make the Epistle of Jude worthy of study, and the loyalty of Jude worthy of imitation.

COMMENTARY

ON THE

REVELATION.

BY

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IN CONSULTATION WITH

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PREFACE.

A COMMENTARY on the Apocalypse could not probably be so written as to meet the views of all students of the New Testament. The interpretation of prophecy is always difficult. In this case it is made especially so by the *Apocalyptic* character of the book. Made up, as Stuart says, "of one continued series of symbols, unaccompanied for the most part by such plain and explicit declarations with regard to their meaning as are generally to be found in like cases among the prophecies of the Old Testament," whatever theory of interpretation for the book is adopted remains still a theory, however confidently presented, with no such ultimate test of its accuracy as to compel assent. The only course open to an expositor, in such a case, is to study the book itself faithfully, with such helps as may be available to him, keeping strictly to the text, and making it his business to ascertain and state the meaning of the text, leaving at one side, so much as is possible to him, all preconceptions and prepossessions.

It is only just that the writer of this preface should assume the entire responsibility of the method of interpretation used in the commentary now offered to the reader, as well as of the work in general, which appears in it. Dr. Boise's state of health, together with the pressure of professional duty, has made it impossible for him to undertake more than what relates to Greek construction and critical exegesis, save that the section in the Introduction upon the language and literary style of the Apocalypse is written by him. All the manuscript, however, has been read to him, and questions of textual reading, of rendering, and of exegesis as involved in these, have been carefully examined; the present writer having great pleasure in leaving all such questions to be determined by one whose life-long experience as a Greek instructor, and whose devotion, now, to sacred studies, together with his recognized eminence as a scholar, entitle him to rank as an authority in whatever concerns New Testament criticism.

The nature of the work here undertaken seemed to warrant the writer of this commentary in varying somewhat the procedure which may be preferred by those

who are called upon to deal in a similar way with other of the New Testament books. Points present themselves from time to time that require more of expansion than is practicable in the exposition proper. These are treated in the form either of "General Comments," or of "Excursus." Some of the more general aspects of the exposition itself are considered in connection with these separate divisions. It is hoped that a more clear, as well as a more full presentation of some of the more difficult subjects requiring distinct treatment has thus been practicable.

Perhaps there is no book of the Bible the literature of which is in a certain way so little helpful to an expositor, as that of the Apocalypse. Learned works upon this remarkable portion of the inspired volume do, indeed, abound, and these in matters of special exegesis are often very serviceable. But the views of the writers are so utterly conflicting, for the most part, as to the general scheme of interpretation adopted, that the student of them soon finds himself driven to take from each whatever of useful suggestion he may find there, and then proceed independently in his search for the meaning and lesson of the book. In preparing this commentary, a somewhat wide range of reading and investigation has been practicable. The works mainly used have been those of Alford, Lange, Hengstenberg, Düsterdieck in Meyer, Carpenter in Ellicott, The Speaker's Commentary, Stuart, Auberlen, Züllig, Wetstein, Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, Wordsworth, Farrar, besides lectures of Edward Irving, and of Dr. Vaughan, formerly of the Middle Temple: and, as among older writers, Bengel, Brightman, Dunbar, Mede, and others. The scheme of interpretation adopted is in some measure eclectic, and still to a considerable extent independent. The writer has not been ambitious to construct a scheme of his own, but has aimed to combine what seemed susceptible of use and safe to adopt, in the commentaries, especially of Ellicott, Alford, and Lange, with much use, in matters of critical exegesis, of Düsterdieck and Stuart. To the great scholars and writers who have been his companions in this study during some three years and a half, he owes a debt of obligation which no merely formal words of recognition and thanks could ever repay.

For the most part, the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, which was made also the chief textual basis of the Revision printed in this volume along with the authorized version, has been followed in our own exposition. There is less occasion to go back of the excellent work of Westcott and Hort, and the manuscripts so much relied upon by them, in any inquiry after the true text, as the variations in the Apocalypse among manuscripts, though very numerous, are less vital in character than in some other of the New Testament books. Manuscript authority,

however, has been consulted where thought necessary, and the aim has been, so far as possible, to ascertain the text which most accurately represents that of the inspired author himself.

To the writer of these pages, the months of study devoted to this marvelous book make up a section of his life hereafter to be looked back upon with peculiar feelings. So difficult a work would not, probably, have been undertaken, only for the assurance of coöperation on the part of the beloved and honored scholar who has more than redeemed every promise of aid, and as well the conviction that in passing through the hands of the Editor of that series of commentaries, what he should write would be met with a scrutiny than which none could be more capable or more generous. To have been associated with Dr. Boise and Dr. Hovey in a service of this kind is of itself occasion for the deepest satisfaction, while the work itself has been self-rewarding in no common degree.

J. A. SMITH.

CHICAGO, *January* 15, 1883.

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION.

I. ITS AUTHOR.

At the opening of the Book of the Acts, we find two of the apostles standing forth with special prominence, and in intimate association. These are Peter and John. In those events which signalized the opening of the New Dispensation, these two are introduced in company, and so acting and speaking as jointly to represent their brethren in the apostleship. Of the two, however, Peter is the one who speaks and acts most in the capacity of a leader, and who, contrary to what we should have anticipated of him—as that disciple whose courage and loyalty so signally failed at the critical moment—appears, evidently, as the organizer of the infant church.

In due time another figure appears upon the scene. The function of the organizer becomes less conspicuous, while that of the doctrinal teacher fills the foremost place. This is assigned to Paul. But there remained still another. A time was to come when, the organization and order of the church having been settled, and its doctrine so fully set forth as to endow it for the office it should fill to the end of time, as a witness to the truth, the opening scenes of its contact and conflict with the world-powers, which should resist, and sometimes hinder its progress, would be unfolded in such a manner as to make it fitting that some indication be given as to what *the future* of the church should be. Thus it comes about that the last of the sacred books—the consummating pages of Inspiration—takes the form of *prophecy*. And so while to Peter was assigned preeminently the organizing, and to Paul the teaching function, to John was assigned that of the *prophet* of the New Dispensation.

Of all the apostles—not excepting Paul himself—John was that one on every account best suited to the Apocalyptic office which thus fell to him. As we study this final book of the New Testament revelation; as we enter into its spirit; and especially as we observe in what prominence the person of the glorified Jesus comes forth into the field of view—we realize the fitness of that selection which makes the Beloved Disciple the recipient of these divine communications, and the medium through which they should be transmitted to the church of all the future ages. No one of the whole number—as his Gospel and Epistles testify when compared with other writings of the New Testament, rose so easily to the plane of those revelations which exhibit the person of the Son in his divine oneness with the Father, and in which all spiritual realities stand forth, less as doctrinal media through which to grasp eternal things, than as the eternal things themselves. No one of them could say with such truth as himself: "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3); it is he that we find saying: "The Life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto

us" (1 John i. 2). John entered, as none of his brethren did or could, into the spiritual *arcana* of the New Dispensation, and was prepared by his very mental constitution, still more by his peculiar spiritual attainments, for the wonderful visions in which a Revelation, in form and substance so transcendent, was to be made.

Over the question whether the Apostle John was indeed the author of this book, there has been much controversy. Two facts in this connection are significant: (1) that his authorship was first questioned through what Carpenter, in Ellicott's Commentary, terms "doctrinal prejudice"; (2) that, as is agreed on all hands, the oldest and earliest witnesses testify to the Johannean authorship, beginning with Justin Martyr, about the middle of the Second Century, and coming down to the middle of the Third. At the date last given, an active controversy was in progress between two schools of Scripture interpretation—one of these carrying the allegorical, the other the literal, method to an extreme. By the latter school, passages, especially in the Apocalypse, referring to the millennium, had been taken in a grossly literal and material sense, giving offense to those better instructed and more judicious. Dionysius of Alexandria, who belonged to the former school—the allegorical—in opposing these views, was much disturbed by the use made of the Apocalypse; and not satisfied with showing that the Chiliastic teachings which he combated were a perversion of the teaching of this book, he went so far as to question the apostolical authority of the book itself. He admitted it to be the work of some "holy and inspired man"; but denied that he was an apostle. It was at this time (about A. D. 247), and under these circumstances, that the Johannean authorship of the book was first called in question, at least in any reputable quarter.

The later objections to the Johannean authorship of the Apocalypse, originate in much the same way as the earlier ones, and proceed upon very much the same grounds. "Doctrinal prejudice" predisposed to a hostile view of the question—the Christology of this book, perhaps, so distinct and emphatic in its recognition of our Lord's divinity, offending one class; while its millenarian teachings were equally offensive to others. The critical tendencies and methods, also, of the present age, find in the book a peculiar opportunity. Its character and structure are remarkable. In its style, it bears some features of singular contrast with other writings of the same apostle. It is difficult of consistent interpretation, and has so often been used in support of wild theories as to fulfillments of prophecy, that some of the discredit justly suffered by them reacts upon the authority so unjustifiably quoted in their behalf. From all this it has resulted that first the inspiration, and then as involved in this, the apostolical authorship, of the book have been denied; meanwhile even some, who would allow it a certain measure of canonical authority, are unwilling to admit that it was written by the Beloved Disciple himself. The subject cannot be treated at large, here. Briefly we touch upon the evidences sustaining the view so long, and still held by the great body of instructed Christians, classifying them as follows:

I. External Evidences.

(*a*) The testimony of Christian writers nearest in point of time to the date of the book itself—such as Justin Martyr, A. D. 96 (?)–166; Melito of Sardis, died 171; Theophilus of Antioch, died 180; Irenæus, 140–202; Tertullian, 160–220; Clement of Alexandria, 160–215; Origen, 185–253. All these are express in their testimony to the fact that John wrote the Apocalypse. Though Eusebius, the historian, treats the point as undetermined, he does so in the face of these testimonies; while writers subsequent to his date, such as Basil the Great, Athanasius, Ambrose, Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, so far from sharing in his doubt, constantly quote the book as written by the Apostle

John. Such a concurrence of testimony on the part of those in a position to determine a question of this sort, and in every other way deserving of credit, could be set aside only by opposing evidence of the most conclusive kind.

(*b*) The only other theory as to the writer in whose behalf the authorship of the book may be claimed, deserving of notice, is that which assigns it to a person of whom very little is known, named John the Presbyter. He is mentioned by Papias, in a passage of doubtful import, not as making him the author of the Revelation, but as one of those to whom he represents himself as applying for information upon subjects of Christian teaching. Eusebius also mentions a report that at Ephesus there were two monuments, each bearing the name of John, the one being taken for that of John the Apostle, the other for that of John the Presbyter. Jerome, however, referring to the same tradition, adds that some in his time were of the opinion that the two monuments were memorials of the same person—*Johannis Evangelistæ*—"John the Evangelist." In a word, the very identity of the second John—John the Presbyter—is so doubtful, and there is such an utter lack of indication that, even if this person ever existed, he was capable of writing such a book as the Revelation, that the naming of him in this connection seems like the desperate expedient of the mere controversialist.

II. Internal Evidences.

(*a*) Of these should be mentioned: first, the fact that the author of the book names himself John. In four places he does this (1 : 1, 4, 9; 22 : 8). The manner in which the name is introduced in these places implies (1) that it was a name well known, and the identity of the writer sure to be recognized by those to whom the book was originally addressed; (2) that his relation to the Seven Churches named in the early part of the book was such as to make him a suitable medium for communication to them in that tone of authority and admonition which he employs. It is known that the Apostle John spent the closing years of his life among the churches of Asia Minor, and that he held amongst them a position wholly consistent with the attitude toward them that he here assumes; (3) in the third mention of his own name by the author of the book (1 : 9), one is reminded of those words of the Lord to John, with his brother James (Mark 10 : 38, 39), while they are at the same time in eminent keeping with what is known of the tender, sympathizing, and fraternal spirit of the Apostle John; (4) Prof. Stuart calls attention to the similarity, in language and tone, between the allusion to himself by the writer of the Revelation in chapter 22 : 8, and a like allusion in the Gospel by John, 21 : 24, as having struck him "with great force." In the latter place we read: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things"; in the former: "And I, John, saw these things and heard them." In every one of these instances, therefore, it may be claimed that the mention made of himself by the writer, is in perfect consistence with the theory that he is none other than the Apostle John.

(*b*) The light in which John exhibits Christ in this book—its Christology—is an important point of internal evidence. The expression, for example, in 1 : 1, "which God gave unto him," Christ, harmonizes with the general teaching of John's Gospel as to our Lord's divinity, where, as Hengstenberg says, the apostle "constantly makes statements which imply that the Son has everything that the Father has, and yet has nothing but what he has received of the Father." Stuart, taking the same view in general, mentions as an important point of internal evidence, "the Christology of the Apocalypse in respect to the dependence of the Saviour on God the Father, for his *doctrines and instructions*," as being "strikingly in unison with that of John." Having compared the words, "which God gave unto him," with such passages in the Gospel as

17 : 7, 8; 5 : 19, 20; 7 : 16, he adds: "Elsewhere in the New Testament different modes of expressing this relation may be found; but they are unfrequent, and wanting in the special resemblance here indicated."

(*c*) The use of the term *Logos* as indicative of a person, and as a distinctive title of our Lord. This usage occurs nowhere in the New Testament, save in the Gospel by John, in his first Epistle, and in the Apocalypse. As Stuart says, "it seems to be purely Johannean."

(*d*) Among resemblances between the Apocalypse and the Gospel by John, which may be viewed as in some sense casual, and still for that reason all the more noticeable, is the circumstance that while John is the only one of the evangelists who, in the history of our Lord's crucifixion, mentions the fact that his side was pierced with a spear, we find in the Revelation an allusion to the same circumstance at 1 : 7—"they also which pierced him." Those who have treated the two passages critically, call attention also to the fact that the Greek word used, both in the Gospel and the Revelation, for "pierced," is different from that in the Septuagint Version of the prophet Zechariah (12 : 10), which in the Gospel is mentioned as fulfilled in the incident described. The Septuagint translators use one word (κατορχέομαι), and the author of the Gospel and the Revelation another (ἐκκεντέω). This difference on the one hand and identity on the other, in the use of words to express the same idea, is regarded as pointing to identity of authorship in the case of the two books last mentioned.

(*e*) It is in the Gospel of John that Jesus is pointed out as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." No other of the evangelists gives him this title. In the Revelation it is so given no less than twenty-two times. This free use of the symbol seems highly consistent with the marked and emphatic manner in which, twice in the same chapter (John 1 : 29, 36), the same writer records the testimony of John the Baptist concerning the Messiah: "Behold the Lamb of God!"

(*f*) Other points of evidence might be named, in the verbal usage of the Revelation, as compared with other writings of the Apostle John. These, however, require for their adequate presentation a more critical treatment than will be practicable here.

II. LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STYLE.

We present above, all that our limits will allow, in support of the commonly received opinion, that the writer of the Fourth Gospel, of the Epistles of John, and of the Apocalypse, is one and the same person; though at different periods in his life, with widely different surroundings and mental conditions. A point of difficulty is suggested as regards the language and literary style. How the three causes just named may influence the style of a writer, might be illustrated at length. Our own literature presents many and striking examples. Whatever difficulties, therefore, we encounter in studying the language of those parts of the New Testament attributed to John, the Beloved Disciple and Apostle, though they may appear great, they are not, we think, insurmountable, and may be intelligently explained by a suitable regard to the points above mentioned.

A word will be in place here respecting the nature of the linguistic difficulties. The Greek scholar, in reading the Fourth Gospel, finds it written in tolerably good Greek, with comparatively few departures from the literary language of the time; but on turning to the Apocalypse, he is at once struck with ungrammatical constructions, more numerous and more marked than in any other part of the New Testament. Those

which we have noticed most frequently are a neglect of the ordinary rules of agreement, and the repetition of the personal, after the relative pronoun, in the manner of Hebrew writers.

By the side of this difficulty, which we shall frequently attempt to account for, and more than counterbalancing it in our judgment, we will mention one point that we have not seen presented elsewhere. The young scholar finds all the writings attributed to John very easy Greek. He can in the same time and with the same effort, "get out" a much longer lesson, so as to recite it satisfactorily, in the Apocalypse, or the Fourth Gospel, or in the Epistles of John, than in any other part of the New Testament. The contrast in this one respect to the style of Paul, or of Peter, or of Jude, is most remarkable, and is something which the young student, comparatively unfamiliar with Greek, can appreciate even better perhaps than the most profound Greek scholar. This undoubted fact must be owing to the structure of the language; and marks it, not only as peculiar, but also as similar.

Granting, therefore, that there is a similarity in this one respect, at least, in all the writings commonly attributed to the Apostle John, we next inquire, Is there any possible way, any rational method of accounting for the irregularities in the style of the Apocalypse? The comparison which we now make, with a view to this question, will be, as is usual, between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse. Supposing the Gospel to have been written about 78 A. D., and the Apocalypse about 95 or 96 A. D. (the dates more commonly given), we have an interval of seventeen or eighteen years. The Gospel was probably written before the vigor of manhood had at all abated, and while the writer was surrounded with a Greek-speaking population. It was perfectly natural that the Gospel should be composed with care, with patient thought, and in tolerably correct Greek, such as the writer daily heard around him. The Apocalypse, on the other hand, seems to have been composed in extreme old age, in the rapture of ecstatic visions, and in a desolate island. Circumstances and states of mind differing more widely can hardly be imagined. It was natural that the man of advanced years should revert in some respects to the dialect of his youth, to the inaccurate Greek which he must often have heard and spoken in his native Galilee. A similar phenomenon is often witnessed, if we mistake not, in old age. It was also natural that the gorgeous visions which passed vividly and rapidly before him, filling him with rapture, should give to his style a peculiar form and coloring, which did not appear when the writer was in a more calm and deliberate frame of mind. These two considerations, both separately and in combination, do not seem to have been sufficiently weighed. They are to us a satisfactory explanation of the differences in language between the earliest and the latest writings of John the Apostle.

We mention one consideration more, which might lead one to expect a new and peculiar style in the Apocalypse. The subject-matter is new; differing widely from that of any other book of the New Testament. It more nearly resembles portions of the Old Testament. While therefore we find many words and expressions in the Apocalypse that remind us of the other writings of John, it is not strange that we discover much in the phraseology that is new, with Hebraisms originating in the fact that so often the visions and imagery of the ancient Hebrew prophets are reproduced in his own.

If, then, these four points—difference of age of the writer, difference of surroundings, difference of mental conditions, and difference of subject-matter—if all these are properly weighed, we need not be surprised at the discovery of some marked

differences of style and of language; and that they would be just what we find them seems natural.

III. WHERE AND WHEN WRITTEN.

The place where the book was written is sufficiently indicated by the author himself —"the isle that is called Patmos" (1 : 9). "Patmos, now called Patina and Patmosa, is a rocky island in the Ægean Sea, situated not far from the coast, to the south of Ephesus, a short distance from Samos. It is little more than one huge rock projecting out of the sea; and at the time of the apostle's exile was probably without inhabitants, unless it might be other prisoners, and those who had charge of the place as a prison."—(*Macdonald.*)

The date of the authorship is a question of more difficulty. Upon this point, only two theories will need to be noticed here: (1) That which fixes this date near the end of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, about A. D. 95, or A. D. 96; and (2) that which places it in the reign of Nero, about A. D. 68. This latter date would make the writing of the Revelation precede the destruction of Jerusalem, an event that occurred A. D. 70. An important question of interpretation thus becomes involved in that of the time at which the book was written. Stuart, with others, adopting the historical method of treating the symbolism of the book, makes an important portion of it—chapters 5–11.—relate to the overthrow of Jerusalem, the final destruction of the Jewish State, and the close of the Judaic Dispensation. To this theory it becomes necessary, of course, that the writing of the book should antedate these events; and as it is agreed that the exile to Patmos occurred under the reign of a persecuting emperor, that of Nero is fixed upon.

The limits necessary to be observed in this Introduction will allow us, in speaking of these two theories, to notice only the chief points of evidence touching the question in hand.

I. It is natural to revert, first of all, to such witness as may be found on the part of those who were in a position to have personal knowledge upon this subject. Of this —the testimony of early Christian writers—there is not much of a specific kind; and even this appears to rest mainly upon a single passage of one writer—Irenæus. But Irenæus is very explicit, to the effect that "the Apocalypse was seen not long ago; but nearly in our own time, near the end of the reign of Domitian." Irenæus, as a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of John,, was in a position to be well informed upon a subject of this kind. Other writers near the time of Irenæus, make similar statements, following, apparently, the authority of Irenæus himself. Various attempts are made to explain away this passage in Irenæus; to invalidate its authority, as itself founded—so these writers claim—upon a doubtful tradition, or as susceptible, in some parts of it, of a different rendering. After careful study of the argument, we find ourselves unconvinced, that by any such means the testimony in question can be set aside, or substantially shaken.

II. The argument in favor of the earlier date (A. D. 68, or at some time under the reign of Nero), rests, apart from its criticism of reasons given for the later one, largely upon passages in the Apocalypse itself, which are supposed to demand for their exposition a date for the writing preceding that of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is quite clear that the interpretation cannot be allowed to fix the date, and then the date to determine the interpretation. That method of reasoning cannot, of course, be admitted in any case. The objections to this date are such as follow:

(1) The positive testimony of the early Christian writers, who name Domitian as the emperor under whose reign the persecution occurred in which John was exiled to Patmos, and the Revelation was written.

(2) The lack of historical evidence, that the persecution under Nero reached so far as to Asia Minor; or, indeed, was felt beyond Rome itself. Numerous passages in the Revelation imply that it was written at a time when bloody persecutions of the Christians widely prevailed, as was the case under Domitian, but not under Nero; while the exile of the writer himself to Patmos, which may well have occurred under Domitian, is not likely, for the reason named, to have done so under Nero.

(3) The condition of the Seven Churches of Asia to whom the epistles in the opening chapters of the book are addressed, make it seem impossible that the date of the writing should have been so early. Hengstenberg justly regards this evidence as decisive. If the Revelation was written in the time of Nero, not above six or seven years can have elapsed since the writing of the Epistle to the Ephesians by Paul. What the condition of the church was at that time, may be inferred from the tone of this epistle. Is it conceivable that in so short a space of time so great a change can have taken place? The condition of all these seven churches, unless it should be that of Philadelphia, is such as could occur only after the lapse of a considerable period, when the influence of the personal apostolic ministry had in some degree declined, when the false teachers, such as the Nicolaitanes, had crept in, and when an insidious spirit of worldliness had corrupted the original simplicity and purity. If we fix the date of these seven epistles toward the end of Domitian's reign, some thirty years will have passed since the founding of the churches in Asia Minor; an interval sufficient, but only sufficient, for the development of such changes as the whole record implies.

The various theories that assign for John's exile and the writing of the book other dates, such as the reign of Claudius, that of Galba, or that of Trajan, need not be discussed here. We may close what we have to say on this point with the words of Alford: "We have a constant and unswerving tradition that St. John's exile took place, and the Apocalypse was written, towards the end of Domitian's reign. With this tradition, as has been often observed, the circumstances seem to agree very well. We have no evidence that the first, or Neronic, persecution extended beyond Rome, or found vent in condemnation to exile. Whereas, in regard to the second, we know that both these were the case. . . . These things then being considered—the decisive testimony of primitive tradition, and the failure of all attempts to set it aside, the internal evidence furnished by the book itself, and equal failure of all attempts by an unwarrantable interpretation to raise up counter evidence—I have no hesitation in believing with the ancient Fathers and most competent witnesses, that the Apocalypse was written near the end of the reign of Domitian, *i. e.*, about the year 95 or 96 A. D."

IV. THEORIES OF INTERPRETATION.

The various theories of interpretation adopted in the exposition of the Apocalypse may be classed as principally three. As Auberlen states them, these are: (1) "The church-historical view," which "regards the Revelation as a prophetic compendium of church history, and supposes that the exalted Saviour has revealed therein the chief events of all centuries of the Christian era, in detail, and with chronological accuracy." (2) "The second view is peculiar to those circles of modern German theology who deny the genuineness of Daniel. They start with a conception of prophecy which excludes a real beholding of the future, revealed by God. Hence they limit the view of John, as

well as that of Daniel, to his contemporary history. . . . This exegetical view is generally accompanied by the critical view, that the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse cannot be by the same author." (3) The third view starts from a belief in real predictions. It does not even deny the possibility of prophecies so minute and special as the interpreters belonging to the first class find in the Apocalypse; but it denies "that the New Testament Apocalypse, as it lies before us, *de facto*, is or was intended to be a detailed history of the future."

These general schemes of interpretation are, of course, variously modified in the hands of different writers. Bengel, for example, with whom the first, or "church-historical" view originated, carries chronological calculations to an extreme, leading the way in those interpretations that claim to find exact explanations of Apocalyptic numbers, and even fix the dates of events yet future. Elliott, in "*Horæ Apocalypticæ*," employs the same general method, but dwells less upon efforts to determine with exactness questions of "times and seasons," and differs from Bengel, at many points, in the historical events he selects as fulfillments of Apocalyptic traditions. Gaussen and Barnes follow Elliott in many things; but differ from him as to some of the methods proposed for bringing the history and the prophecy into unison. The "church-historical" method was, at one time, the favorite one with writers upon this book. The often arbitrary manner, however, in which expositors have chosen out of the history the events to be claimed as fulfilling the prophecy, and the many instances in which interpretations before the event, based upon chronological computations, have failed of support in the event itself, have cast much discredit upon it, and have placed it, in the view of many at least, in the category of conjectures, or as mere exploits of human ingenuity.

The second general method of interpretation needs only a bare mention here. It is thoroughly rationalistic, unscriptural, and self-destructive. Surely, nothing can be less "rational" than to expound a "revelation" as revealing only that which history has already recorded—a "prophecy" as being no prophecy at all! Besides that this theory, whether applied to Daniel or the Revelation, creates far more difficulties than it removes.

The latest results of careful, scholarly study of this subject, seem, for the most part, to favor the third method of interpretation noticed above. This theory recognizes, without reserve, the prophetical character of the Apocalypse. It views the book as a "revelation," in prophetic form, of the purpose of God, as respects both the Church of Jesus Christ and the world in which it abides, from the opening of the Christian Dispensation to its very close. In this general and large sense, it is therefore "church-historical." But it does not attempt details of the kind so often found impracticable and delusive. The actors on the great Apocalyptic scene it views more as *powers* and *principles*, than as *individuals*, and traces fulfillments, therefore, more in the line of great movements, than in that of special events. The unfolding and application of this method of interpretation in the exposition which follows must, for the most part, be left to appear in the exposition itself. A few chief points only can be indicated here.

As all writers upon the Apocalypse, so far as we know, are agreed, the outline study of the book finds its contents falling naturally into three main divisions. The first is introductory, and embraces the three first chapters. This includes the exordium proper, and those letters or messages to the Seven Churches, which, while supplying a basis to what follows, are suited to prepare the reader of every age for the mingled admonition and encouragement of the succeeding visions. With the fourth chapter, the more

strictly *Apocalyptic* portion of the book begins. To the end of the eleventh chapter, in a series of striking pictures, future things in their relation to the Kingdom of God in this world are set forth, in a way to forewarn the church in each age of the testing trials that are coming, and at the same time to show how God is "for" it, in judgments visited upon a persecuting and ungodly world, and in the final complete triumph, when the kingdoms of this world finally "become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." With the twelfth chapter another series of visions opens, in which the same general scene is presented; but at new points of view, and in a new aspect. It begins with the very opening of the Dispensation—the birth of the man-child. Consistently with this feature at the beginning, it personifies, under a new system of imagery, the forces entering into the great spiritual contest, running through centuries, with such variety of awful vicissitude, to the end of time. This division of the book closes with the nineteenth chapter. The twentieth chapter may be treated as transitional. In it "the mystery of God" is finally finished, and "the time of the end" comes. From the beginning of the twenty-first chapter to the close of the book, the final happy condition of the redeemed is set forth, under a vivid symbolism, which might almost be said to exhaust the capabilities of even inspired imagination

In connection with the general view of the method of interpretation followed in our exposition, a variety of special questions arise, which, however, our space will not allow us to consider now. We leave them, therefore, for particular examination in our treatment of the text.

V. SYMBOLISM OF THE BOOK.

The symbolism of the Apocalypse we regard as susceptible of a classification which may shed light upon its exposition. This classification is based upon the outline view of the book already indicated. Passing by the Introduction, when we come to the first series of visions (ch. 4–11), we find upon examination that while, as in those which follow, there is a reproduction of the symbolism used in Old Testament prophecy, it is that symbolism as it occurs in a particular connection. Even the opening of this part of the Revelation, its Theophany—its sublime description of that manifestation of God which the seer beholds through the open door of heaven—is strictly in keeping with that found in the opening chapters of Ezekiel, and which introduces the long array of God's judgments, alike in punishment of his people's degeneracy, and in the destruction of their enemies. The symbolism that follows, as foreshadowing the retributive dispensations coming upon the apostate church and the ungodly world, is almost a reproduction of that in Ezekiel and in Joel. Compare, for example, Rev. 6 : 4–6, with Ezek. 4 : 9–17, where the symbols representative of famine are used; also, Rev. 6 : 8, 9, with Ezek. 5 : 10–13, where pestilence is threatened and described. Then, where the locusts are introduced in Revelation, with other attendant judgments and miseries, the reader recognizes, at once, the imagery already made familiar in the prophecy of Joel. In the description of the Two Witnesses, distinct reference is made to that passage in Zechariah which speaks of Joshua the high-priest, and Zerubbabel the civil governor, as representing the spiritual order of the Judaic Dispensation, on the one hand, and its secular order upon the other, symbolized in the candlesticks and the olive trees, "standing before the God of the earth." The measurement of the Temple, in Rev. 11, reminds us at once of a like representation of the Jewish polity found in Ezekiel; while the direct and specific mention of "the great city, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev. 11 : 8), in a yet more pointed way indicates that the symbolism in this part of the book follows a line of

representation having reference to the kingdom of God in its Judaico-Christian conception. In other words, we view this part of the prophecy as representing the church, in its general idea as the kingdom, under that view which Paul, in some of his epistles, makes so prominent, viz., as *the true Israel.* A marked indication of this is the sealing of the "hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of Israel," described in the seventh chapter.

When we come to the second division in our analysis of the book (ch. 12–19), we notice a remarkable change in the character of the symbolism. The likeness to Old Testament symbolism is retained, but to this, as we find it in another of the Old Testament books—the Book of Daniel. The imagery used by him to represent certain great world-powers, in their nature, action, and destiny, is again used by John in his picture of like things and like events. It is a change in the symbolism corresponding to the change in the point of view. There is a succession of "beasts" combining in themselves attributes of those most ferocious, and seeking, as is their nature, to waste, consume, and destroy; yet, as it is represented in Daniel, themselves consumed and destroyed in the end. The representation of organized antichristian powers as "Babylon," recalls the very scene of Daniel's own visions and prophecies, while the angelic ministries used remind us of that which he himself enjoyed. The conception of the church as a woman in heaven clothed with the sun, symbolizing the Kingdom of God, and the man-child to whom she gives birth, recalls Daniel's "one like the Son of man," who "came with the clouds of heaven." Under this symbolism, as a whole, we seem to have presented the Kingdom of God in its more direct conflict with the power of the world; a more distinct personification of those forces that stand arrayed against each other during the whole period of gospel propagation—spiritual, heavenly, gracious upon the one hand; worldly, devilish, destructive on the other—and a more decided and express indication of the essential character of each.

In the concluding chapters of the book (21, 22), the imagery carries us back to the first chapters of the Old Testament, and to the beginning of things in this world, as if to make more vivid the truth that, in making "all things new," the Redeemer follows the pattern of that which, as Creator, he originally framed. There are "new heavens" and "a new earth"; not as the old, but a heaven and an earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." There is a paradise, after the similitude of the original one; only in this the garden becomes a city. It is no longer open to invasion, as the first Eden was; but has walls and gates for defence; and into it shall enter no manner of abomination, nor anything that "loveth and maketh a lie." Through this city flows the River of Life, and in the midst of the broad street of the city is the Tree of Life. Thus is the old restored in the new—restored in myriad-fold splendor, beauty, and delight; and so as to be thenceforth forever secure.

Any discussion in detail of Apocalyptic symbolism, including that of Apocalyptic numbers, will be best reserved for the exposition.

VI. CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

As John is the *prophet* of the New Dispensation, so the book we are to study is its *prophecy.* Whatever of this nature appears in earlier parts of the New Testament is mostly what we may venture to term prophetic glimpses. It comes into the narrative or the discussion as incidental, rather than as composing the main subject. This is true even of those remarkable predictions of our Lord in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of Matthew. These are given in answer to an inquiry of the disciples; and while they

are not, indeed, to be treated as merely casual utterances, but weighty announcements as to things even now future—some of them—deserving the most reverent and thoughtful study; yet it is made plain in many ways, there and elsewhere in the record, that our Lord did not appear as a prophet, in the sense of having it for his peculiar office to declare things to come. Indeed, he more than once checked his disciples when they sought to gain from him something of that knowledge of the future which it is so natural for men to desire. The day and the hour, the "times and seasons," especially, he treated as things not within the province of his personal ministry; and indeed only announced those coming events that stood in some such relation to the purpose of that ministry as made their announcement not only suitable, but necessary.

In the preaching and the epistolary writing of the apostles, a like thing appears. There is a certain reserve apparent in the allusions made to future things as revealed by the Spirit of inspiration. The language used is general, and to some extent vague, while the prophetic utterance is evidently made, at all, only with reference to the general purpose in view in the passage where it occurs. The mention made by Paul of the "mystery of iniquity" and the "Man of Sin"; to the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead; and by Peter to the melting of the elements, the passing away of the heavens, and the new heavens and new earth, may be quoted as examples. It seems clear that all fullness of New Testament prophecy, not only in details, but in general outline, was left to be the subject of that one of these writings in which the whole Book of divine records and revelations should have its consummation and completion.

It is further to be noticed that the prophecy in this book is *Apocalyptic*. Between that which is Apocalyptic and that which is simply prophetic, a distinction is to be made. When we speak of prophecy, we allude to the disclosure of what is future more upon its human side. It is the utterance of the prophet. Apocalypse—the *uncovering* of that which is hidden—or revelation—is a divine act. The revealing element is in both; only in the one it is the *utterance* of the revelation that is chiefly implied; in the other its *communication* to the prophet himself. In the book before us, the divine side of prophecy is peculiarly manifest. It is the divine disclosure of divine purpose; the unsealing of the Book of the divine purpose by a divine hand: "*the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him*, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The human instrument in its record here, is almost lost in the grandeur of that which he has to disclose. We see him as if rapt away amidst the wonders of the transcendent vision, and even his voice is to us like that of one speaking from behind a veil, or lost in the clouds.

VII. WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Prophecy seems to be, in part, a response to that in man which prompts the desire for a knowledge of the future. This, as is well known, has sometimes led to results highly pernicious in their nature, offering opportunity for those who trade upon the credulity of mankind, and inducing the resort to means more than questionable for penetrating the veil that hangs between the future and the present. In itself, no doubt, the tendency is a right one, for the very reason that it belongs so much to the essential nature of man. We are therefore not surprised to find the Spirit of inspiration addressing it in the interest of what most deeply concerns alike the individual and the race.

But this, of course, does not explain the whole purpose of Scripture prophecy in

general, or of this one now before us in particular. It would further seem to be appropriate to the very nature of a collection of inspired writings, that it should include accredited predictions of future things. Having their ultimate source in that Infinite Mind to which the future is as the present, it might well be presumed that the scope of such writings would partake somewhat of the character of the mind that inspired them, and be accredited as thus inspired by the very fact that they prove their independence of limitations that affect all human productions. Thus the writing, when in the event prediction reaches its fulfillment, becomes its own ample witness, the Author of the Bible revealing himself in his word, as the Author of nature in his works.

A moment's further reflection suggests how incomplete and, in a sense, unsatisfactory a book like the Bible would be without this feature. Its subject may, in the most general way, be said to be the Kingdom of God in the world. That kingdom in its own nature embraces for its period the entire history of the human race. It is well nigh inconceivable that the account of it given through inspiration should be limited to any section of this period, or alone specially adapted to the men of that generation to which it is first of all given. It is not enough that it is a history, or a body of doctrine. The very essential purpose of it requires that it should still look forward from the point of view of any one age, however far down the stream of time that age may be, and still have something to disclose, appealing to hope and desire; something future, to which the people of the covenant may still look as a coming glory or a coming struggle. Having that feature in the measure in which we find it there, the Bible is an inspiration to one age in the same way that it is to another; its riches of impulse and admonition and encouragement being as exhaustless as its riches of instruction and reproof and present comfort.

Consistently with this view of Scripture prophecy in general, we think it sufficient to say of the Apocalypse in particular, that it is a foreshowing of the fortunes of the Christian church, viewed as the spiritual Kingdom of God, during the ages of its militant state; to which is superadded a prophetic glimpse of that final triumphant and perfect state which comes in the restoration of all things. Its purpose must be to forewarn upon the one hand, to inspirit and sustain with courage upon the other. These ends it has served efficiently, during the centuries of the Christian Dispensation thus far, and these ends it still continues to serve. But to this may be added the fact that scarcely any one of the sacred writings has answered the end alike of intellectual and spiritual *inspiration* so fully as the Apocalypse; and this also we must presume to have been contemplated in it. The book is a wonderful one, even for those who deny its prophetic character: a marvelous creation of imaginative genius, even were it this alone. But it has commended itself as more than this to so many superior minds, has supplied such impulse to inquiry, and inspired so much of elevating and quickening study, that it may truly be said, in its intellectual and spiritual influence, to crown and consummate those Scriptures, all of which have been in the world such an element of both spiritual and intellectual power.

"To show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. . . . Blessed," indeed, "is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

VI. THE PAROUSIA.

If any one theme can be named as the absorbing and comprehensive one in this book, it must be given to us in the words (1 : 7), "Behold, he cometh with clouds."

With this announcement the book opens. With the Lord's own declaration, "Behold, I come quickly" (22 : 7), and the response of his servant, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," the book closes. The Dispensation whose events and issues the book in the main prophetically traces, so far from being a final one, is but preparatory to that which *is* final. Of this fact, indications appear everywhere in the book itself, down to its closing chapters. The scene presented is not that of a final condition, settled and permanent, but a broken and changeful one ; a theatre upon which warring forces meet, a vast stage of human history crowded with actors and issues, while in some of the changes of the tremendous drama, heaven itself seems in suspense as to what the final act shall be. The souls of martyred ones under the altar, through many centuries of ordeal, are crying, "How long ! O Lord ?" while it is only in the finishing of "the mystery of God" that any final answer is given.

All this indicates a continual looking forward ; the attitude is one of expectation ; only as this consummation is reached is the key to the mysteries of divine providence at last found. And that consummation reaches its climax in the personal coming of the Lord. Now, the crucial point in the interpretation of this book is, for these reasons, that which concerns this second personal advent, more especially in its relation to that peculiar and significant feature of the whole prophecy—the millennium. This is not the place to set forth the reasons which influence us in placing this personal second advent *after* the millennium, rather than *before*. It must suffice, here, to simply announce the fact that our convictions, after careful study of the prophecy, compel this conclusion. The grounds upon which these convictions rest will appear in the proper place. For the present, we simply declare our acquiescence in that view of this second coming of our Lord which makes it the great event of the future ; which regards it as bearing a relation to all that is now passing, and is yet to come in the present Dispensation, no less vital than the first advent bore to the four thousand years of human history that preceded it ; and which claims that only as this event is set in its true relations, can this consummating Book of the New Testament be adequately understood or explained.

IX. GENERAL ANALYSIS.

A phrase rich in significance occurs at ch. 10 : 7, in this book—"the mystery of God." "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants, the prophets" (*Revised Version*). This "mystery of God" may, in general, be said to be the subject of the book. One finds in it, indeed, when carefully studied, what seems like a gathering up, in brief and sublime summary, of the whole of that inspired prophecy, the details of which we find sown all through the earlier books of Scripture. It is a panoramic exhibition of the divine procedure in dealing with the church and the world. It is human history at the point of view of the Kingdom of God in its *origin*, its *ordeal*, its *progress*, its *consummation*.

Of course, a group of visions and allegories cannot be subjected to processes of logical analysis as other writings may. It is only after much study of such that the adjusting principle begins to disclose itself, and only after the details have been in some degree understood, that the general system in which these appear in orderly arrangement is even suspected. If we proceed to state, here, our own impressions as to the adjusting principle and the general system of the Apocalypse, as it appears to us after much study of it, verse by verse and chapter by chapter, we keep in mind the fact that

very many such have been already proposed; and that if others have failed to grasp the idea of this difficult writing, so also may we.

Assuming that what we term the adjusting principle in this remarkable series of visions and allegories is as we have stated—a comprehensive disclosure under prophetic forms, of that "mystery of God" which is the substance of "the good tidings" declared "to his servants the prophets"—we find the subject of the book falling naturally into four general divisions.

I. The first is the *origin*, or *beginning*, of that Kingdom of God which is the central and regulating fact in the annals of our race. This is given to us, consistently with the general character of the book, under the forms of symbol and allegory. That in the history of this spiritual Kingdom of God which antedates Christianity is brought to view in the theophany that forms the subject of the fourth chapter. The King is there seen enthroned. The encircling Elders, on their four and twenty subordinate thrones, represent at once that ancient divine order which anticipated and foreshadowed the gospel, and the later and consummating one seen in the Church of the Lord Jesus. The four living creatures—symbols of the sentient creation—represent, in the vision, the fact that this Kingdom of God comprehends all being, while in those acts of adoration and worship in which they join with the elders, they recognize the supremacy of the enthroned One, and the universality of his reign. In the midst of these stands the Lamb, "as it had been slain," receiving the sealed book, and alone, in all the universe, found worthy to "open the book and loose the seals thereof"; symbolizing the central place filled in all history, sacred and secular, by the fact of redemption, and also the truth that the key to all history is the incarnation, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Son of God. We shall have frequent occasion to observe how in all the succession of visions, the many and striking changes of scene throughout the Apocalyptic drama, these several features of the theophany remain as fixed elements. He "that sitteth upon the throne," the Lamb, the elders, and the living creatures, from time to time re-appear, as if to remind us how this fact of the Kingdom of God—the reign in righteousness of the Righteous King—is to be everywhere kept in view.

In so far as the origin of this Kingdom concerns Christianity, it is brought to view at three points in the succession of the visions: (1) In the opening of the first seal (ch. 6 : 1, 2); (2) in the sounding of the first trumpet (ch. 8 : 7); (3) in the appearance of the woman, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (ch. 12 : 1, 2). In the first of these, the Kingdom of God, or Christianity, is seen in its opening, triumphant era; in the second, those providences are indicated which signalized that era, more especially in the dispersion of the Jewish nation, the destruction of their city, and the passing away of the former Dispensation; in the third, we have presented the incarnation, the birth of the man-child, in whom, as "ruling the nations," the might and the dominion under this new order should centre, and by him in subsequent history be exercised.

II. Next is the *ordeal*. Like everything else in this world, the Kingdom of God must have its ordeal, and demonstrate its right of recognition in all that it claims to be. The ordeal, in this case, embraces centuries, and is fierce and testing beyond all previous example. The experiences of ancient Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness were but a shadow of those which were to be the lot of the anti-typical Israel, the church of the Lord Jesus, in the centuries of its own hot ordeal. This ordeal is set forth in three ways: (1) Under the second, third, fourth, and fifth seals, the special features being the outbreak of Pagan hostility (the second seal, ch. 6 : 4), the mischiefs of the Antichristian

Apostasy (third seal, 6 : 5), and persecution in its Pagan form (fourth and fifth seals, 6 : 7–10); the whole ending in the fall of Paganism, and its burial under the ruins of the Roman Empire itself (sixth seal, 6 : 12–17). (2) Under the trumpets, which bring to view events occurring upon a wide theatre, and exhibiting the Kingdom of God in respect to what is more exterior, and concerned more with its general fortunes: the first trumpet exhibiting under striking imagery the providential events which signalized the beginning of this long history (ch. 8 : 7); the second trumpet, the fall of the Roman Empire, with its consequences as affecting the national life of Christendom (ch. 8 : 8, 9); the third and fourth, those effects of the Apostasy which were seen in the general condition of nominal Christendom, especially in the failure of Christian knowledge, and the prevalence of false teaching, with its consequent ignorance and superstition (ch. 8 : 10–12); the fifth, the opening of the abyss and the issuing forth of Satanic influence and agency, filling Christendom with violence, crime, and misery—the terrible centuries of the Dark Ages (ch. 9 : 1–12); and the sixth, the prevalence of desolating wars, more especially the assault upon apostolic Christendom by the Saracens. (3) Antichrist in his manifestation as the wild beast out of the sea, or the hostile world-power, imperial and other, in all ages (ch. 13 : 1–10); and the wild beast out of the earth, corrupt and oppressive ecclesiasticism (ch. 13 : 11–18), known also as the false prophet—false teaching in religion and the various forms of infidelity, having, more or less, their root in such teachings, or taking occasion from it to "deceive the nations." In all these forms the *ordeal* is exhibited under imagery intense and vivid to the last degree. The tenth and eleventh chapters are interposed with a view to show how in the midst of all God preserves to himself a "remnant," a "church in the wilderness," a seed for the harvest of a better era. A like truth is symbolized in the sealing of the servants of God.

III. This better era appears to be signalized by the appearance of the strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow upon his head, his face shining as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire (ch. 10 : 1, 2). He holds in his hand a little book, open, the symbol of a restored gospel and of a rapidly approaching consummation. He announces the speedy sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the finishing of the mystery of God—the fulfillment of prophecy and promise in respect to ultimate victories of the Kingdom of God. Like things are signalized by the resurrection of the slain witnesses (ch. 11 : 11–13), and their ascension into heaven; also by the angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to the whole world (ch. 14 : 6–7), by the proclamation of the fall of Babylon, and by the choruses of heavenly praise (ch. 11 : 15–18; 15 : 3, 4).

IV. The fourth general division is that of the *consummation*. It is heralded by the outpouring of the vials, with "the seven last plagues"; by the fall of Babylon, or the Papal Antichrist; the Beast, or Antichrist in its manifestation as a hostile world-power; and the False Prophet, or falsehood and deception, misleading and ruining the souls of men. Then comes the binding of the Dragon, or Satan (ch. 20 : 1–3), the full establishment of the Kingdom during the millennial period (ch. 20 : 4); to be followed, at the end of the thousand years, by the ultimate victory over Satan and his host, the coming of the Son of man, the great white throne, the general resurrection, the final judgment, the new heavens and the new earth.

We offer this as what seems to us an analysis of the contents of this difficult book, which may afford some general idea of the arrangement into which, upon careful study, its several parts appear to fall.

X. ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS BY CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1–3. The Prologue.
Ver. 4–8. The Salutation.
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CHAPTER II.

EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES.

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3. *To the Church in Pergamos.*
   Ver. 12. Inscription.
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4. *To the Church in Thyatira.*
   Ver. 18. Inscription.
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CHAPTER III.

EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES (CONTINUED).

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   Ver. 7. Inscription.
   Ver. 8–13. Commendation and Promise.

7. *To the Church in Laodicea.*
   Ver. 14. Inscription.
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THE

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, [a] which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which [b] must shortly come to pass; and [c] he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

2 [d] Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things [e] that he saw.

3 [f] Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for [g] the time *is* at hand.

1 THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [1] gave him to shew unto his [2] servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified
2 [3] *it* by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of
3 Jesus Christ, *even* of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

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[a] John 3:32; 8:26; 12:49....[b] ver. 3; ch. 4:1....[c] ch. 22:16....[d] 1 Cor. 1:6; ver. 9; ch. 6:9; 12:17....[e] 1 John 1:1....[f] Luke 11:28; ch. 22:7....[g] Rom. 13:11; James 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7; ch. 22:10.——1. Or, *gave unto him, to shew unto his servants the things, etc*....2 Gr. *bond-servants:* and so throughout this book....3 Or, *them.*

Ch. 1: 1-3. THE PROLOGUE.

1. Revelation. The word implies that the book which opens thus is to have a special character. As already pointed out in the Introduction, it implies that the contents of the book are to be more than simply inspired teaching; they are *prophecy*, and more even than in the general sense prophetic, for they are *apocalyptic*. They are an "uncovering" (ἀποκάλυψις) of things hidden. **Of Jesus Christ.** The form of the expression may imply, either that Jesus Christ is the Revealer, or that he is the subject of the Revelation. The words following, **which God gave unto him,** seem to make it clear that we are to view Jesus Christ as revealing, and as revealed only in a remoter sense of the phrase, if at all. The things here to be made known are given to him of God, and by him so communicated, as **to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.** By "servants" must be meant all followers of Christ, and students of his word. Perhaps the term used implies something as to the temper in which those to whom the things herein contained shall be effectually disclosed, must be found; not a captiously critical temper, least of all one of hostility to the great aims and methods of Christ's spiritual kingdom; but one in which he is acknowledged as supreme Lord, and in which there shall be loyal and fervent sympathy with him in all that he purposes, all that he claims, and all that he does. —The things revealed **must shortly come to pass,** because made necessary by the will and purpose of the divine mind; and "shortly," inasmuch as it is the very aim of the book to exhibit, in apocalyptic vision and symbol, the future of the Church of Christ in its relation to worldly history, beginning with the very period itself to which the writer of the book belongs. **And he sent and signified it by his angel.** An *angelus interpres*, "interpreting angel," is supposed by some to be meant. Of this we have more to say further on.—**Unto his servant John.** He here indicates himself by the phrase so often used by his fellow-apostles, "the servant of Jesus Christ" (τῷ δούλῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that [*lit. as many things as*] **he saw.** The rendering in the revised version gives a true sense, although less literal than the one in brackets, above. Stuart labors quite unnecessarily to so connect the clauses as to make it appear that the reference thoughout this second verse is to former writings of this apostle, and thus to find in the words additional proof that the writer of the Apocalypse was the same as the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Alford very justly argues that the words "as many things as he saw," cannot be understood of the contents of the Gospel; for John there expressly says that he wrote only a small part of the things of which he had knowledge, as connected with the life and teachings of the Lord.

3. Blessed is he that readeth. Many expositors take this as an allusion to the custom then necessary, of assigning to a particular person the reading of the Scripture in connection with Christian worship. A very ancient writer on this book, Victorinus, near the end of the third century, makes no mention of such an interpretation, as it would have seemed natural for one to do, living at the time when the custom alluded to was

probably still in use. He takes the word "readeth" in the ordinary sense, as meaning any one who reads. This seems the more probable exposition.—**And they that hear.** Even the hearing of the message may bring a blessing with it.—**And keep those things which are written therein.** Plainly showing that "how" they "hear," will determine the nature and measure of the blessing.—**For the time is at hand.** A general intimation that the things made known will be to each reader and hearer of *immediate* importance; not things to be left apart among the various subjects of Christian study, as concerning only those who may live in some far future age; but as in such a way related, even in point of time, to each Christian student, in whatever age he may live, as to demand of him earnest and heedful attention.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

That this book is a "Revelation" does not imply that it is easily, or immediately to be understood. While it is a disclosure of divine purpose with reference to future things, nothing is necessarily to be hence inferred as to the nature, or method, or measure of this disclosure; which may be such, and in the present case *is* such, as to tax the patient industry of the student, and to require of him that he shall not be in too much haste to "know the times and the seasons," especially.

The nature of the divine Sonship is to us inscrutable; only *the fact* of it is revealed. The Son is known to us alone in his human manifestation as the Son of man, while yet the Son of God. As a man, Jesus had divine knowledge only through the union of his divinity, as the Son, with the Father. To say of anything, therefore, that it is what the Father only knows, is equivalent to saying that it belongs to the sphere of divine knowledge, not that of human or angelic knowledge. Jesus, we find, is often spoken of, and often speaks of himself as he was in his human manifestation. As one with the Father, and divine, he had knowledge of these things "which God gave unto him," of himself; as the Mediator, as the man Christ Jesus, his acquaintance with them came from the fullness of that divine knowledge, and so it is spoken of as that which God gave unto him.

Alford regards the expression "shortly" (ἐν τάχει) as "a prophetic formula, common with him to whom a thousand years are as one day, and used to teach us how short our time, and the time of this our world is." Hengstenberg says of the phrase, connecting it with the similar one in ver. 3: "These declarations are opposed to the view of those who would convert the entire book into a history of the time of the end, and confirm the view which treats it as our companion through the whole course of history."

There are indications of angelic presence and ministry at various points in the course of these communications. At ver. 10, in this chapter, the voice which John hears, "as of a trumpet," seems to be that of an angel. As is shown further on, the words: "I am Alpha and Omega," etc., at the beginning of ver. 11, must be omitted, because not found in the oldest manuscripts. What is said, therefore, is not the announcement of the dignity and titles of the person speaking, but simply a call to attention, and a direction to write the vision about to be seen, and send it to the churches. It is in tone as the sound "of a trumpet," while the voice of him whom John perceives, as he turns, standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks, is "as the sound of many waters" (ver. 15). The indications are that these are distinct voices: the one of the angel who (as some think) is the seer's attendant, more or less, through all the visions; the other that of the Lord himself. The angel-voice "as it were of a trumpet" is heard again (ch. 4:1) at the opening of the new series of visions following the present one. There, also, it seems to be, not the voice of the Lord himself, but of the same angelic being perhaps as is mentioned in the clause noted above, "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." Like allusions are found at 19:10, and at 22:8, 9.

As suggested in the exposition, the phrase, "his servant John," is apostolic. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1); "James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1); "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (Jude 1). A reason is here suggested for that view of the authorship of the book which ascribes it to the apostle John. **"The word of God"** and **"the testimony of Jesus Christ,"** must be taken as referring to the contents of the Revelation, and not to any former writing of the same

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him [a] which is, and [b] which was, and which is to come; [c] and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, [d] *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the [e] first begotten of the dead, and [f] the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him [g] that loved us, [h] and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and [1] who is to come; and from the seven Spirits
5 that are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and [2] loosed us from our sins [3] by his

a Exod. 3:14; ver. 8....b John 1:1....c Zech. 3:9; 4:10; ch. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6....d John 8:14; 1 Tim. 6:13; ch. 3:14....e 1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18....f Ephes. 1:20; ch. 17:14; 19:16....g John 13:34; 15:9; Gal. 2:20....h Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7.—1 Or, *who cometh*....2 Many authorities, some ancient, read *washed*....3 Gr. *in*.

apostle. They are "the word of God" as having been given by him in the manner stated in ver. 1, as also in the general sense in which this phrase is so often used in the Scriptures; and they are "the testimony of Jesus Christ," not alone because, receiving this "word" from the Father, he gives it to his "servants," but also for the reason that the truth of it is pledged by the fact that it is thus communicated. He is "the faithful and true witness." The divine source of the message is made certain by the fact of his personal activity in its communication, which fact is itself made certain by his personal appearance, as described in subsequent verses of this chapter. We know that in receiving what is here declared, we are receiving no "cunningly devised fables," but the word of the very "Lord from heaven."

The post filled by the reader in the Christian churches of primitive times, was no doubt far more important when copies of the Scriptures were so much more rare than now, when they are found everywhere, especially in Christian families. Even, however, if some reference to this custom is to be understood in the benediction upon them that read and them that hear the sayings of this book, the application of the words should not be so limited as to make them purely an allusion to the custom in question. Their broader significance is that of a benediction upon those who, at any time, in any way, either themselves personally should come to know these things "and keep" them, or with like effectualness bring them to the knowledge of others.

4-8. THE SALUTATION.

4. John to the Seven Churches which are in Asia. The names of the churches, given below, sufficiently indicate their locality. The designation, Asia, is to be understood of what was really only a section of that part of the continent known as Asia Minor. It included the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and the islands in the adjacent Ægean Sea. These districts constituted a Roman province, under the jurisdiction of a proconsul, to which the name Asia was given. —**Grace be unto you, and peace.** The salutation is apostolic, and quite consistent with the accepted theory as to the authorship of the book.—**From him which** [who] **is, and which** [who] **was, and which** [who] **is to come.** The last part of this clause should not be viewed as implying any allusion to the anticipated second coming of the Lord. Taken with what immediately precedes, it is simply a paraphrase of that venerable Divine Name revealed to Moses (Exod. 3:14), and which so sublimely announces the essential Being of the Eternal God.—**And from the seven spirits which are before the** [his] **throne.** This seems to be an anticipatory allusion to what appears in ch. 4:5, where mention is made of "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." In that place the symbolism presents the Divine Spirit himself; the "fire" indicating him in those offices of his ministry elsewhere mentioned (Matt. 3:11), and the number "seven," as in so many other places, implying perfection. With that sublime theophany now in mind, as he salutes his brethren in the apostolical benediction, John uses a form of designation for the Third Person in the adorable Trinity, suggested by the vision he is soon to relate.

5. And from Jesus Christ. The Son is named last, and as he is in his form as the Word made flesh, perhaps for the sake of closer connection with the following clauses, in which he is set forth in those characters and offices which make his person so peculiarly dear to faith.—**The faithful witness**—*trustworthy—worthy to be believed.* The insertion of "*who is*" supplied by the translators, makes the connection more clear. In his Gospel, John had already recorded those words of Jesus (John 18:37): "For this

6 And hath [a]made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; [b]to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
7 [c]Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and [d]they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.

6 blood; and he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto [1]his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and
7 the dominion [2]for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

a 1 Pet. 2: 5, 9; ch. 5: 10; 20: 6....b 1 Tim. 6: 16; Heb. 13: 21; 1 Pet. 4: 11; 5: 11....c Dan. 7: 13; Matt. 24: 30; 26: 64; Acts 1: 11.
d Zech. 12: 10; John 19: 37.—1 Or, *God and his Father*....2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.* Many ancient authorities omit *of the ages.*

cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." We must take the words in our present passage as in a like way broadly referring to him in his office as the Redeemer and Teacher of men, and not alone to what is said in verse second of this chapter, of the book before us as in especial, "the testimony of Jesus Christ."—**The first-begotten of the dead.** Alford says: "Death is regarded as the womb of the earth, from which the resurrection is the birth." The allusion is to our Lord's resurrection, "as the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15: 20).—**And the prince of the kings of the earth.** "All these things will I give thee," said the Tempter. From God the Father the Mediator received not only all power on earth, but also in heaven.—**Unto him that loved us.** More correctly, *that loveth us*, the participle used (ἀγαπῶντι) being in the present tense.—**And washed us from our sins in his own blood.** The oldest manuscripts—Sinaitic and Alexand.—have, instead of *wash* (λούω), *loose from, free* (λύω). If we adopt this reading, the sense becomes: "and *freed* us from our sins by his own blood." The doctrinal significance of the passage is the same, in either case, though the figure employed differs. Stuart and Hengstenberg (and apparently Ellicott) prefer the reading "washed." Alford and Düsterdieck (in Meyer's Commentary) regard the reading "freed" as preferable. The principal reason given by the two former is that the imagery in "washed us from our sins" is more in keeping with the Hebrew manner of speech, to which the writer of this book so often conforms. The words in Ps. 51: 4, "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity," are quoted in illustration. After all, it is a question of fact as to the preferable reading in the original Greek. The MSS. authority is certainly on the side of the reading, "*freed* us from our sins," and a critical treatment of the passage would seem to require that this reading be adopted.

6. And hath made us kings, (*a kingdom,* βασιλείαν) **and priests.** The correct rendering of the Greek in the word we here distinguish, is important. A less ambiguous translation would be, *made us to be a kingdom;* that is, made a kingdom *of* us, not *for* us. Believers are spoken of collectively as a "kingdom," in the sense in which that word is so often used in the New Testament, not individually as "kings." The word "priests" applies to them individually, as well as collectively, and has reference to the abolishing of that ancient ritual, in which approach to God must be always with priestly intervention.—**Unto God and his Father.** To God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the being to whom access is obtained in the privileges of Christian priesthood, and in whom all might and dominion and kingship at last culminate.—**To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Glory and dominion *unto the ages.* Here occurs that phrase (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), used so often in the Scriptures to express the idea of eternity. Its literal meaning is, "throughout the ages," implying indefinite duration.

7. Behold, he cometh with clouds. *Who* cometh? It must be he that "loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his own blood"; for he is the principal subject in the whole connection. There is, therefore, in this the announcement of that great fact which meant so much to the first Christians, and which either expressly or by implication so pervades the book we are now studying. The phrase, "with clouds," plainly recalls that saying of our Lord himself (Matt. 24: 30): "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming *in the clouds of heaven* with power and great glory." It recalls, also, the passage (Dan. 7: 13): "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." The symbolism of the cloud, we should notice, is not that of promise, but of judgment; as in the passage (Isaiah 19: 1): "Behold, the Lord

8 [a]I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, [b]which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, [1]who is and who was and [2]who is to come, the Almighty.

a Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; ver. 11, 17; ch. 2:8; 21:6; 22:13....b ver. 4; ch. 4:8; 11:17; 16:5.——1 Or, *he who*.....2 Or, *who cometh*.

rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt." That the symbolism is to be viewed as in its sterner aspect, is indicated, also, in the auxiliary clauses of the verse under consideration.—**And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds** [tribes] **of the earth shall wail because of him.** By the clause, "they also which pierced him," must be understood a reference to the fact mentioned by this same writer, and alone of the evangelists by him; as found in ch. 19:37 of his Gospel. It singles out those who crucified the Lord, as they who shall above all be filled with confusion and dismay, when the Pierced One appears as the Judge.

8. In the eighth verse, beginning, **I am Alpha and Omega,** the Divine Being is represented as himself speaking, in the same manner as when in some of the ancient prophets, especially Isaiah, the Voice breaks suddenly and sublimely into the current of prediction. In terms consistent with those which he used when first he declared himself by his name (Exod. 3:14) the Eternal God, here, not simply as the Father alone, but as the Everlasting One, announces himself; as if with that awful name endorsing and confirming as true the things written under this divine dictation. Alluding to the words, "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," Hengstenberg says: "The emphasis is to be laid upon the Omega. It is as much as: I am Alpha, therefore also the Omega. The beginning is the surety for the end. The unconditional supremacy of God over the world, which is placed before our eyes by the beginning, since God made heaven and earth, since he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast, is also brought into notice again at the end." A literal rendering of the Greek would confirm this view: "I am the Alpha, and I the Omega also."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

That we have in this book a writing, meant for the churches of all time, addressed to particular churches, as named, is quite in accordance with the apostolical method in general. The Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Philippians, have a value and application as wide as Christendom, and as lasting as the Gospel Dispensation itself; the truth they teach, the lessons and precepts they enforce, while suited to those immediately addressed, being suited no less to all Christians, in all times. The communications in this book, in like manner made to certain churches hereinafter called by name, also in like manner concern equally the people of God in every age, and are to be regarded as meant for all. The *reason* for individualizing the communication, in its first application, in the present case, must be the same as in the instances above referred to. There was a special reason in the circumstances of the churches addressed, making the message for them immediately appropriate and needful; and a general reason in the fact that such individualization serves to illustrate the truth taught and make its presentation more vivid. There may be no sufficient ground for considering these Seven Churches, in their condition as described, *typical* of certain states of the church in general. To some extent, however, they may be so treated, at least so far as to make their spiritual state *illustrative* of that into which individuals and churches, alike, are prone to fall. "The number seven," says Edward Irving (*Lectures on the Revelation*), "is employed in this book several times, and always, as we judge, with the same signification, denoting unity out of diverse things, completeness out of diverse particulars; and this property of expressing completeness, totality, and unity, the number seven deriveth, as I conceive, from the only work of God which is finished; to wit, the work of creation, which was accomplished in seven successive acts, and yet is one complete work."

The salutation and benediction addressed to these churches are noticeable both for their resemblance to and their contrast with the apostolic benediction in general. *Grace* and *peace* are invoked, as always in these salutations. The Divine Names, however, commonly joined with the invocation, are paraphrased in a manner striking and suggestive. It is

true, as Düsterdieck says, that John is very far from having in view in this place any dogmatic allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity; yet it is equally true, as the same writer also intimates, that here as elsewhere throughout this book, the Divine Being is conceived in the three-fold manifestation so familiar under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it did not suit the fervid state of mind of the writer to simply name these. The august formula—**which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty**—while it expresses the whole Godhead, as when first given to Israel through Moses in the name Jehovah, at the same time designates the Father in a manner suitable to the opening of a book in which so much of his sovereignty and his grace is to be revealed. The Spirit is conceived under a symbolism suggested by the splendors of that vision of the divine glory which was still so recent and so fresh. Around the Saviour's name John gathers conceptions suggested by all he had personally known of the Suffering One, and all that had now been revealed to him of the glory of the Reigning One.

"That loveth us." The form of the phrase in the more correct version should be noticed. The reference is not merely to that love unto death that Jesus showed in suffering for his people; but that everlasting love which they find in him upon the throne equally as when he hung upon the cross.

Whether the version, "washed us from our sins," or the revised version, "loosed us," be preferred, the doctrinal significance of the words is, as we have already said, the same. The allusion is, of course, to that efficacy of the atonement which places pardon and sanctification within the reach of every soul, and makes these the actual possession of every *believing* soul.

The word "kingdom"—made us to be a kingdom—should be taken as meaning more than simply that all believers are spiritually united, as if in a vast commonwealth, with Jesus as its king. It means that in their union with Christ they partake of *his* kingship, and so have fulfilled in them that which is said in such remarkable words of him "that overcometh" in ch. 2: 26, 27: "To him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." In these and in like words is foreshadowed that progressive and ultimate triumph and reign of Christ himself, in which his people, by virtue of their union with him, and their participation in all the vicissitudes of the mighty struggle, shall share.

But the New Testament Church, as realizing the typical aim of the ancient economy now done away, is both a kingdom and a *priesthood*. It is so by reason of the fact that in Christ, the Head of the Church, both offices—king and priest—are united; and also by reason of that union with himself into which he brings all his people. His kingship differs from all others in this, that it is exercised, not simply as a dominion *over* those who are subjects of it, but as a dominion *through* them, so that they fully participate with him in all that it imports. The priesthood, also, is peculiar in this, that it is exercised not only *for* them, but *in* and *by* them. The words of the hymn—

> My faith would lay her hand
> On that dear head of thine,
> While like a penitent I stand,
> And there confess my sin—

have a strict propriety in so far as this—that a Christian believer not only offers prayer for himself and for others, but does this, in the spiritual sense, with his hand upon the slain offering, after the manner of the ancient priest, and so, in a certain way is permitted the privilege and the function of a true priesthood. In other words, the whole conception exalts both the privilege and the efficacy of *prayer* under the New Dispensation.

The symbolism in "cometh with clouds," and its significance, have already been briefly noticed. While we have in these words, the first mention in this book of the event to which all its revelations look forward, we find it consistent, in its intimations, with what we claim to be the relation of our Lord's second coming to other events, and with the purpose of that coming. It is consistent, also, with allusions to the same event found elsewhere; as in Matt. 25: 31–46: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Such representations can safely be interpreted only as having in view the end of all things, as concerns the existing Dispensation of Grace, and must there-

9 I John, who also am your brother, and [a]companion in tribulation, and [b]in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, [c]for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
10 [d]I was in the Spirit on [e]the Lord's day, and heard behind me [f]a great voice, as of a trumpet,

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and [1]patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the
10 word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me

[a] Phil. 1:7; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:8....[b] Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12....[c] ver. 2; ch. 6:9....[d] Acts 10:10; 2 Cor. 12:2; ch. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10....[e] John 20:26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2....[f] ch. 4:1; 10:8.—[1] Or, *steadfastness*.

fore, as will more fully appear hereafter, point to the second advent of the Lord as post-millennial. Vitringa, as quoted by Hengstenberg, says: "Nor is it necessary that the words of John be restricted to the last advent of Christ. For Christ is said in Scripture style to come in the clouds of heaven, as often as he displays his glory, and shows himself as present to the church. And there are various gradations of that advent of Christ in which he is seen by his hardened enemies themselves with the greatest anguish and lamentations."

9-20. THE VISION OF THE LORD.

9. I John. One is led to observe the similarity in John's method, here, of announcing himself, to that of Daniel (7:28; 8:1; 9:2; 10:2). It is, perhaps, not a forced view to regard the expression, with some, as imitated from Daniel. There are many points of resemblance, in what he communicates, between this prophet of the New Testament and those later prophets of the Old—Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. That his manner should also resemble theirs is natural.—**Your brother, and companion in tribulation.** In his Epistles, John addresses those to whom he writes as his "little children." Here he is their "brother." The reason of this difference is not far to seek. He is now more the bearer of a message, than one speaking with apostolical authority. Besides, "tribulation," persecution has come, and the common suffering has imparted to their mutual relationship more of the fraternal character. It is more in keeping with the position of one who suffers with them, to speak of himself as a "brother," than as a father; just as Jesus "is not ashamed to call" them "brethren" with whom and for whom he suffered.—**The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ** [or *in Jesus*]. The "kingdom" of Jesus Christ is that mediatorial kingdom whose beginning, progress, struggle, and triumph are the subject of this book. In the partnerships, hopes, and fruitions of this kingdom, John makes himself the brother of those to whom he writes. "Patience," in this place, is properly "endurance," combining the two ideas of suffering or trial, and steadfastness—the latter idea being the more prominent one. That it is spoken of as "the patience of Jesus Christ," implies the closeness of the relation subsisting between himself and his people. It is not only endurance for his sake; but in some sense endurance in which he himself shares; just as where (Matt. 25:45), he makes injury to his own, injury to himself.—**Was in the isle that is called Patmos.** More literally: "*I became—came and remained—in the isle*," etc. The reason, or occasion, of this sojourn in Patmos is not given, further than is implied in the words which follow, **for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ** [omit *Christ*, as above]. By this must be understood, in accordance with early Christian testimony, as shown in the General Comments below, a condition of exile on account of his faith and of his fidelity and eminence as a Christian teacher.

10. I was in the Spirit. A better translawould be, "I *became* (ἐγενομην) in the Spirit." The form of the expression implies a condition superinduced by some special cause. What this was appears from the words, "in the Spirit." The meaning is, a state of spiritual ecstasy or exaltation, induced through divine influence, imparted for this purpose. **On the Lord's day.** The reasons for holding that this can only mean the First Day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2), are noticed below. This is the first occurrence of the phrase, anywhere in the New Testament. The manner of its use, here, however, implies that it was a designation of the Christian day of rest and worship already so common as that it could not fail to be understood.—**And heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.** We are not to regard the voice, or the person speaking, as like what men *seem* to see or hear in dreams. They were real; but as belonging to that spiritual world which is so wholly removed from the sphere of the senses, they could be present only to one, like John, in

11 Saying, [a]I am Alpha and Omega, [b]the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, [c]I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 [d]And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [e]*one* like unto the Son of man, [f]clothed with a garment down to the foot, and [g]girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

11 a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis,

12 and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden [1]candlesticks;

13 and in the midst of the [1]candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden

a ver. 8....*b* ver. 17....*c* Exod. 25:37; Zech. 4:2; ver. 20....*d* ch. 2:1....*e* Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:13; 10:16; ch. 14:14...*f* Dan. 10:5....*g* ch. 15:6.——1 Gr. *lampstands.*

the Spirit; that is, so delivered from the dominion of sense, and brought into such relation to the spiritual world, as that spiritual voices could be heard and spiritual forms seen.

11. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. In these words we have another question as to the true reading of the original. The words are not found in the oldest manuscripts, and by the best interpreters are regarded as introduced by copyists. This judgment should be followed, and we should read: "And heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying," **What thou seest write in a book, and send.**—In this abrupt and startling way, the extraordinary scene about to open is announced. A message is to be communicated. John is to receive it, and he must give it a form such as that it may be sent to those for whom it is first of all intended, and may be preserved for future ages.—**Unto the seven churches which are in Asia.** The order in which these churches are named has been noticed. Ephesus stands first, because, says Hengstenberg, "the seat of John's labors." The order of the list then "proceeds northward to Smyrna and Pergamos. Then from Pergamos, as the most northerly point, it goes in a regular southeasterly direction down by Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, to Laodicea, which is almost in the same parallel of south latitude as Ephesus, but considerably farther east."

12. Turned to see the voice that spake with me. The voice is spoken of in verse 10 as "a great voice, as of a trumpet." The loudness and the trumpet-tone of the voice were in keeping with the august nature of the vision, the majestic sound of it suggesting something extraordinary, even before the person addressed had turned to see whence it came.—**Spake.** If we translate the word more literally, "was speaking," so that it may express continuous action, we get the incident, as it occurred, more clearly before the mind. When the voice is first heard, John turns suddenly, as would be natural, to see who it is that speaks.—**Seven golden candlesticks.** The word "candlesticks" is misleading. The seven-branched light-holder in the tabernacle and temple, to which the symbolism here refers, was for holding *lamps.* The better rendering is "lamp-stands." The same symbol is used in Zech. 4:2; only with a very notable difference. In Zechariah, a single lamp-stand is seen; here there are seven. This difference corresponds to that which is observed in comparing the marked organic unity of the Jewish spiritual and civil economy, and the organic multiplicity of the Christian. The seven distinct light-holders in John's vision represent the individuality and multiplicity of gospel churches. Each, as bearing lights, fulfills that office which the Lord appointed in the words, "Ye are the light of the world." The number *seven* has no farther reference to the seven churches of Asia just named, than as in their case also, signifying, in accordance with the symbolical force of this number, *completeness.* That is to say, these seven light-holders represent all churches in all ages, alike as setting forth their design, their relation to each other and to him who walks in the midst of them, and as all equally addressed in the messages which follow.

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. As in the Greek the article is wanting, Stuart prefers to translate "like unto *a* son of man," that is, one in the form of a man. He does not doubt, however, that he whom John thus sees is the Lord, in his glorified human body, or that the phrase, "Son of man," is taken from the frequent use of the same phrase by our Lord himself in the Gospels. We cannot fol-

14 His head and [a]*his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and [b]his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;
15 [c]And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and [d]his voice as the sound of many waters.

14 girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a
15 flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice

a Dan. 7: 9....b Dan. 10: 6; ch. 2: 18; 19: 12....c Ezek. 1. 7; Dan. 10: 6; ch. 2: 18....d Ezek. 43: 2; Dan. 10: 6; ch. 14: 2; 19: 6.

low him in his translation, for these reasons: (1) Winer explains (p. 125), that the omission of the article before the word "Son" does not give the word this general, indefinite sense, since "Son" is made definite by the word "man" (ἀνθρώπου), which follows. The same form occurs at John 5: 27: "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is (the) Son of man (ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν)." Also at Rom. 1: 4, where the phrase, "the Son of God," is in the Greek simply "Son of God." See also Mark 1: 1; 15, 39; Matt. 27: 43. (2) Alford calls attention to the usage in the phrase "the Spirit of God" (πνεῦμα Θεοῦ), where a like omission of the article quite frequently occurs. A significant example is that passage (Matt. 3: 16), where we read, "And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God (πνεῦμα Θεοῦ) descending like a dove." (3) New Testament usage, therefore, warrants us in retaining here the usual translation. We may add that we cannot well doubt it to have been the purpose of John, in this place, to indicate distinctly the Lord Jesus Christ, as now glorified, when we consider how much of significance and force the identity of the person speaking lends to what is subsequently said by him in the messages to the churches.—**Clothed with a garment down to the foot.** The long, flowing garment, or robe, was a mark of royal or priestly dignity.—**And girt about the paps** [the breast] **with a golden girdle.** That the girding of the robe is at the breast, instead of the loins, does not appear to be an incident so significant as some (Bengel, De Wette, and others) suppose. Bengel led the way in maintaining that a girdle at the loins indicates activity; at the breast, repose. Züllig considers the latter mode of girding a sign of dignity and majesty. Düsterdieck quotes Josephus (Antiq. III. 7, 2), as authority for the statement that the priests were customarily girded about the chest.

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. The word for "white" (λευκόν), agrees, in the Greek, with "wool" (ἔριον), and not with "snow" (χιών). So that the passage should read, "*His head and his hair were as white wool, as snow.*" One is reminded, here, of the passage in Daniel (7: 9): "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool" In the account of the Transfiguration, we read (Luke 9: 29), "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering." In the manifestation of himself to John, on the occasion now under consideration, the person of the Lord was in a like manner transfigured and glorified, only yet more resplendently, and with more evident signs of divinity. It should be noticed that both the head and the hair are described as "white, like white wool," showing that we are not to take the description of the hair, like wool, too literally, but as indicating in general the majestic splendor of the whole head and face. It is only the *whiteness* of the wool which is intended in the expression.—In a like way we must take the words which follow, **and his eyes were as a flame of fire.** This can mean only that gleaming brilliancy of the eye, which has so much to do in lending force of expression to the whole face. We are reminded, again, of Daniel (10: 6): "his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire."

15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they [*it*] **burned in a furnace.** Much difficulty has been found in the etymology of the word (χαλκολιβάνῳ) translated "fine brass." Alford claims that "this word has defeated all the ingenuity of the commentators hitherto." "Brass" (χαλκός) "from Lebanon" (λίβανος) might seem the most natural explanation, if mention were anywhere made of fine brass, or brass of any kind, as brought from Lebanon. "If conjecture were admissible," says Alford, "(which it is not), I should, in despair of a way out of the difficulty, suggest whether the word may not have been χαλκολιβαδίῳ, a stream of melted brass." Stuart and Hengstenberg treat the word as of Hebrew origin, and having the meaning of "fine" or

16 [a]And he had in his right hand seven stars: and [b]out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: [c]and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.
17 And [d]when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And [e]he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; [f]I am the first and the last:
18 [g]*I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, [h]I am alive for evermore, Amen; and [i]have the keys of hell and of death.

16 as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his counte-
17 nance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not;
18 I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I [1]was dead, and behold, I am alive [4]for evermore,

a ver. 20; ch. 2: 1; 3: 1....b Isa. 49: 2; Ephes. 6: 17; Heb. 4: 12; ch. 2: 12, 16; 19: 15, 21....c Acts 26: 13; ch. 10: 1....d Ezek. 1: 28....e Dan. 8: 18; 10: 10....f Isa. 41: 4; 44: 6; 48: 12; ch. 2: 8; 22: 13; ver. 11....g Rom. 6: 9....h ch. 4: 9; 5: 14....i Ps. 68: 20; ch. 20: 1.—1 Gr. *became*....2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

"clear brass" (see Dan. 10: 6). Strictly speaking, the word means bronze, not brass. We should not read, "as if they burned in a furnace"; but, "as if *it* burned," meaning that the brass, or bronze—not the feet—is pure and shining as it would appear while refined in the furnace.—**And his voice as the sound of many waters.** An impressive image, alluding to the deep murmur of the sea-waves, and indicating the peculiar majesty of the tone. We have explained above, that the voice which John heard at the opening of the vision was not that of him whom he sees, as he turns; but of some attendant angel.

16. And he had in his right hand seven stars. We are to conceive the hand as extended and held open, and the stars resting upon the palm. We may also suppose them to appear there in a circle, like a wreath or garland.—**And out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword.** There is some difficulty in conceiving this in a way to make the description appear congruous and seemly. Perhaps we shall be aided in it by recurring to the passage (2 Thess. 2: 8), "whom [the lawless one] the Lord shall consume with the spirit [breath] of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." To this corresponds, in some measure, what is said in Rev. 2: 16: "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." (See, also, Heb. 4: 12.) The symbolism in all these passages, including the one now especially studied, must indicate the *scrutiny* with which the hearts and lives of men are tried by him to whom belongs judgment as well as mercy, and alike the *rebuke* and the *punishment* with which sin is visited. In forming to ourselves some conception of the imagery, we may think of a shining appearance, like a sword, as if it might be visible breath, proceeding from the mouth.—**And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.** In this the former details seem to be grouped into one view, indicating the majesty of the appearance.

17, 18. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. There are many places in Scripture where the effect upon humanity of even such a measure of manifestation of the divine glory as has been granted to men in this world, is illustrated. Readers may turn to Isa. 6: 5; Ezek. 1: 28; Dan. 8: 17, 18, 27; 10: 7–9. In this present case, we are to note the fact that he in whose person this manifestation appears is that "Son of man" whom John had known so intimately, and between whom and himself the mutual tie had been so peculiarly tender. The effect of this view of him in his glory is not to be attributed to any other cause than the surpassing splendor of the vision itself acting upon the consciousness of human lowliness and sinfulnesss in the person beholding.—**And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.** When Isaiah (6: 5) was in a like manner overcome, one of the seraphim came to him and touched his lips with a live coal from the altar. Ezekiel (1: 28), in the same circumstances, heard simply a voice speaking to him, and commanding him to stand upon his feet. In Daniel's case, the messenger angel touches him, and sets him upright. To John more is granted than to either of these. The right hand of the glorious being is laid upon him in protection, and the voice speaks re-assuring words, mingling with what implies a present divinity allusions to that human form and history, in the very recollection of which John could not fail to find comfort and support.—**I am the first and the last.** The division of verses, here, breaks the sense, and is plainly wrong. Verse 18 should be read in immediate association with that which precedes. The connection then becomes, "I am the first and the last; **I am he that liveth,** *the Living One,*" (ὁ ζῶν). The latter clause

19 Write [a]the things which thou has seen, [b]and the things which are, [c]and the things which shall be hereafter;
20 The mystery [d]of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, [e]and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are [f]the angels of the seven churches: and [g]the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

19 and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come
20 to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest [1]in my right hand, and the seven golden [2]candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven [2]candlesticks are the seven churches.

a ver. 12, etc....*b* ch. 2: 1, etc....*c* ch. 4: 1, etc....*d* ver. 16....*e* ver. 12....*f* Mal. 2: 7; ch. 2: 1, etc....*g* Zech. 4: 2; Matt. 5: 15; Phil. 2: 15.——1 Gr. *upon*....2 Gr. *lampstands*.

thus explains the first. If we ask, in what sense is Christ "the first and the last," the answer is that he is such as being "the Living One"; the Being who has life in himself, "who only hath immortality," the first and the last. It is quite in the manner of those assertions of his own eternal being which Jehovah makes in so many places in the Old Testament. (See Isa. 43: 10-13; 44: 6; 48: 12). It is therefore the attribution to himself of that eternity of being (equivalent to "I am Alpha and Omega") which belongs to God alone.—**And was dead.** *The Living One that died;* having assumed, in connection with the divinity, a nature capable of death, and in this nature having actually suffered death.—**And behold I am alive forevermore. Amen.** A glorious fact, now asserted with solemn asseveration, and which warrants the joyful confidence of the trusting soul. "My Redeemer *liveth!*"—**And have the keys of hell and of death**—*of death and the world of the dead;* not Gehenna, but Hades. This imagery of the gate and its "keys" was natural in a country and a time when walled cities were so common. It may be taken as a symbol of that concentration of *power*, of which the strong, walled city was itself representative. Hence the personification of Death as some inexorable potentate, and the world of the dead as ruled by him, the dread tyrant. "I am he," says the glorified Redeemer, "that hath the 'keys' of that strong city; a power greater than that of him who seems so invincible, so that he rules only by sufferance."

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. More fully rendered, write *therefore* the things, etc. Says Grotius, "*quia me tam potentem vides*"; Because of what you see of my power and present glory, therefore write. John could not doubt of his commission, in this regard, with such a vision before him. Three classes of things to write appear to be indicated. Between the first and the second the distinction at first does not seem so clear. It might appear as if "the things which thou sawest" (Rev. Version), and "the things which are" must be the very *same* things, since the vision is still a present one. In view of this difficulty, some writers prefer to take the words "which are" (ἃ εἰσὶν), as better rendered, "what they (the things seen) mean." Perhaps, however, we may regard the second and third clauses as in some sort epexegetical of the first; in that case, the clause, "things which thou hast seen," will comprehend the two classes, "things which are," and "things which shall be hereafter"; the former being the messages to the churches soon to be given, with all that appears in that connection; the latter subsequent visions and revelations, as given in later portions of the book.

20. The mystery of the seven stars . . . and the seven golden candlesticks. By "mystery" (μυστήριον), alike in New Testament and in classic usage, is to be understood, not that which is incomprehensible, but simply that which has not as yet been so revealed or expounded as to be actually comprehended or known. In this sense the word was used in speaking of "the Eleusinian Mysteries." Thus, the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks have here a hidden meaning, which must be explained, or revealed, before it can be known. The general significance, however, is given already in the words which follow.—**The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks . . . are the seven churches.** The full significance of what these imply is left to appear more fully in what is said later. The words simply present the general sense of the symbol. By "angels of the churches," we understand, for reasons given in connection with the exposition in the next chapter, the chief officer in each of these churches.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to go at large into the question which has been somewhat discussed, whether John simply visited Patmos for the purpose of writing the Apocalypse, or whether, as has been the almost universal tradition and belief, he was sent thither by the persecuting pagan authorities. The first view, held by a few commentators that follow De Wette, is based upon a meaning given to the words in verse 9: "for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ," and more especially upon the assumed force of the preposition, by them translated "for the sake of" (διά). An equally correct translation is "*because of*," or, "*in consequence of*." The former rendering would imply that the reason of the apostle's stay in Patmos was that he might there receive and record the visions here contained; the latter, that it was on account of "the testimony of Jesus Christ," which he had borne, and "the word of God," which he had preached—on account of his fidelity in this ministry—that his abode had come to be in the desolate island named. While this latter interpretation seems the more consistent and probable, it is borne out by the testimony of those whose witness, in a case like this, should be conclusive. For example, Origen, explaining that passage in Matthew, where our Lord inquires of the two sons of Zebedee, John and James: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" mentions, as illustrating the significance of these words, the murder of James by Herod, and the banishment of John to Patmos "by the king of the Romans," meaning, of course, one of the emperors—though which emperor, he does not say. Victorinus, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian, in A. D. 303, and who was the first of all who have written commentaries upon the Apocalypse, says in substance the same thing, adding, however, that the apostle was condemned to work in the mines, in addition to the sentence of exile. There is really no reason to call in question what has been almost from the date of the book itself, the constant testimony of Christian history as to the banishment of John to Patmos, as we have shown elsewhere, by Domitian; while, as Stuart makes clear, the construction of the passage in question so as to show that it must be taken in this sense, is alone consistent with the usage of the New Testament Greek in like cases.

The testimony as to the early observance of the first day of the week as the Christian day of rest and worship, and of its designation as "the Lord's Day," is conclusive. Two passages in the New Testament may be cited. Acts 20: 7: "And upon the first day of the week, *when the disciples came together to break bread*"; and 1 Cor. 16: 2: "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store," etc. The natural and consistent, almost the necessary interpretation of these passages is that already, in the apostolic period, and probably from the very date of the formal institution of the church with its observances, "the first day of the week"—the day of our Lord's resurrection—was recognized as that which should be observed as the day of Christian rest and worship; when the disciples should come "together to break bread," when they should prepare or make their gifts for the Lord's cause, and when other things should be done as acts of Christian devotion and service. Quite consistently with this, we find Christian writers, at a very early date, speaking of the day as being such as we describe. In the epistle of Ignatius, to the Magnesians, dated about A. D. 101—only a few years after the date of the Apocalypse itself—the first day of the week is mentioned as the Lord's Day, while Christians are characterized as "no longer observing the Sabbath; but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death." Like things are said by Clemens Alexandrinus, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Epiphanius, Eusebius, and others. Stuart quotes, in a foot-note, a highly important passage from Eusebius' Commentary upon the Ninety-second Psalm: "The Word, (Christ), by the new covenant, translated and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the morning light, and gave us the symbol of true rest, viz., *the saving Lord's Day*, the first (day) of the light, in which the Saviour . . . . obtained the victory over death, etc. . . On this day, which is the first [day] of the light and of the true Sun, we assemble, after an interval of six days, and celebrate holy and spiritual Sabbath . . . All things whatever that it was

CHAPTER II.

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith [a]he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, [b]who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; 1 These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the

a ch. 1: 16, 20....b ch. 1: 13.

our duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's Day." With such, and other testimony, so often adduced, as to the authorized nature of this change from the seventh to the first day of the week, there ought not to remain any doubt upon the subject. That construction of the phrase, 'Lord's Day," which makes it mean simply the Gospel Dispensation, "the day of salvation," as is done by a few ancient commentators, or as by some modern ones, so as to make the verse read: "I was transported by the Spirit (or in spirit) into the day of the Lord's coming," is in each case so forced and unnatural as to stand self-condemned.

Rich as the Bible is in vision, symbol, and allegory, it is perhaps impossible to name any passage which in suggestiveness, alike sublime and tender, surpasses, or even equals, this in which Jesus in glory appears to John in the desolation of his exile. When we consider the relation in which these two had stood during the Lord's earthly life, the peculiarly tender tie by which the Master and his disciple whom he loved had been united—the recollection of which must have been the very most precious of those memories which John had cherished during the long years of his ministry since—we readily enter into the emotion with which he recognized the familiar form and feature, even amidst the overwhelming splendor of the manifestation. His human nature could not bear the sight; and still the humanity there, even amidst the overcoming sublimity of the divine, made the vision to him what those which Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel saw, could not be to them. The hand that touched him, the voice that spoke to him, were the hand and voice of all in the universe most dear and most entirely trusted. It was the "Son of man," although "the Lord from heaven."

It is, too, a revelation, to the disciple in each age, of him who walks amid the golden candlesticks, and who never ceases to enjoin: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Thus "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises," is Zion's king. Yet the hand that holds the seven stars, is the hand that the nail pierced; and the brow that shines with such awful splendor is the brow on which sat the torturing crown of thorns.

CHAPS. II., III.—EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES.

Ch. 11: 1–7. TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

1. INSCRIPTION. **The angel of the church of Ephesus.** We leave for the General Comments more particular notice of the title, "angel of the church," contenting ourselves here with indicating briefly the interpretation we prefer. The reasons upon the whole are strongest in favor of that view which regards the term *angel* in this place as the title given to the chief officer in the church; and to him as representing the church. There were reasons why Ephesus should head the list of the churches so addressed. It was the oldest and the chief city in this province of Asia where so many other notable cities also stood, its foundation lying back in pre-historic times. It had been distinguished as the personal residence of the great apostle, Paul, and the scene of his labors during three years of active ministry—the longest performed by him in any one place. Here, also, the apostle John, himself, by all accounts, had his home and his ministry in the last years of his life, having been sent, it would seem, from this city to the scene of his exile. This may be inferred from the statement of Clement of Alexandria in one place, that "after the death of the tyrant [Domitian] he *returned to* Ephesus, from Patmos." The church itself was an important one, and probably held a leading, if not a foremost place among the churches of that region. Fitly, therefore, the messages to the seven churches begin with the church at Ephesus.—**He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.** To Zion God says, by the mouth of Isaiah (49: 16): "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," indicating how much she is beloved, and how tenderly cherished. The like imagery here, in the passage considered, must be regarded

2 [a]I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and [b]thou hast tried them [c]which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast [d]not fainted.

2 seven golden [1]candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and [2]patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;
3 and thou hast [2]patience and didst bear for my name's

a Ps. 1: 6; ver. 9, 13, 19; ch. 3: 1, 8, 15....*b* 1 John 4: 1....*c* 2 Cor. 11: 13; 2 Pet. 2: 1....*d* Gal. 6: 9; Heb. 12: 3, 5.——1 Gr. *lampstands*....2 Or, *stedfastness*.

as superadding to this idea, which seems to be in some measure reproduced in John 10: 28, that of the supremacy of him who thus holds his servants in his right hand, and that of their function, as performing their ministry for him by his power, and with supreme

churches themselves. He walks in the midst of them as a constant presence, and so as to be aware of all that concerns their state, and the measure in which they fulfill their mission as "the light of the world." Hence the propriety of the words which follow.



EPHESUS.

accountability to him. Says Hengstenberg: "Christ holds them fast, so that no one can pluck them out of his hand, whether he is minded to protect or to destroy them."—**Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.** Here the Lord declares himself in his relation, not directly as before to the ministry of the churches, but to the

2, 3. Commendation. **I know.** The epistle to each church opens with this word, "I know" (3: 8*a*). There is in it both encouragement and admonition, since alike what is to be commended and what is to be blamed lies open to him, with, at the same time, a perfect knowledge of what is needed to help infirmity, to correct evil, to strengthen faith, or to stim-

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; [a]or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of [b]the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

4 sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.
5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy [1]candlestick out of its place,
6 except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou

a Matt. 21 : 41, 43....b ver. 15.——1 Gr. *lampstand.*

ulate zeal.—**Thy works, and thy labor** [thy toil], **and thy patience.** "Works" (ἔργα), and "labor" (κόπον), do not mean the same thing. The former is more a generic term, covering all the deeds of the life, good and bad; by the latter is meant labor in the sense of service, especially that which harasses and wearies; that which tries the "patience" (ὑπομονή). The Greek of this last word comes from two words which signify "*to abide under*," suggesting that steadfastness which bears up under burdens, whether these be burdens of service or burdens of suffering.—**And how thou canst not bear them which are evil.** The special force of this commendation seems to be indicated in the sixth verse, below, where it is said, in praise of the Ephesian Church, that it hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, "which I also hate." This was a ground of commendation, as showing that these Ephesian Christians were so of one mind with the Lord that what displeased him displeased them and was intolerable to them. —**And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not.** Paul had said to the elders of this church (Acts 20 : 29): "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." This had now come to pass—wolves, however, not in appearance, but in fact. They claimed to be "apostles," and were not. It was to the credit of the Ephesian Church, that their fidelity and their spiritual discernment protected them against imposition of this kind. They **tried** these pretenders and **found them liars.**

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. This repeats the commendation in the previous verse, with the added praise that all this they did "for my name's sake." Better than the service, the harassing toil, the patience, the fidelity, the scrutiny and rejection of the evil, was the motive inspiring all; that high Christian motive which is at once a stimulus and a support—"for my name's sake." Literally, "for my name" (διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου). The name represents the *person.* This is equivalent, therefore, to saying, "for *me* hast labored and hast not fainted."

4-6. REPROOF. **Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee.** This, "I have somewhat against thee," is said also, in substance, as appears below, of the Church in Pergamos and the Church in Thyatira. The qualifying word "somewhat" is not here in the Greek. Even if it were so, and thus the usual translation justified, it would not warrant any such inference as that this which the Saviour finds thus amiss in the Ephesian Church is not of a serious nature. The language used in the fifth verse, below, indicates emphatically the contrary of this. We should read: "I have against thee," or, as the revisers: "I have *this* against thee."—**Because** [that] **thou hast left thy first love.** We do not understand why Stuart should think it necessary to interpret the "love" in this place as meaning "the former benevolent and beneficent course of conduct." That the Ephesians are, in verse fifth, exhorted to "do their first works," is a very inadequate reason for such a sense, inasmuch as "the first works" (τὰ πρῶτα ἔργα) in that place, so manifestly include, along with what is outward in act, that which inspires the act from within. Hengstenberg's reference to Jer. 2: 2—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," as the illustrative passage, is much more to the purpose. Very truly does he also say that it is one of the characteristics of this apostle, "to combine together the love of God, the love of our neighbor, and brotherly love." There is, plainly, no ground for taking the clause here, "first love," in any other sense than that which has become so common in Christian phraseology—that warm, earnest, active spirit of love to the Saviour so lately found, to all who bear his

7 [a]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give [b]to eat of [c]the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also
7 hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the [1]Paradise of God.

a Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; ver. 11, 17, 29; ch. 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9....b ch. 22:2, 14.....c Gen. 2:9.—1 Or, *garden:* as in Gen. 2:8.

name, to his service, and to souls, that is so much the common and beautiful incident of recent conversion.—**Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen.** It is a falling, not from "grace" in the sense of an absolute loss of that which they had possessed; for in that case the words that follow, enjoining effort on their own part at self-recovery, would be wholly out of place. They would in such a case be enjoined to seek for renewed bestowment of the lost spiritual life. It is *decline* in the fervor and fidelity that characterized them in the beginning. Yet, even so, it should be to them a matter for deep concern; since the consequences of continued decay in spiritual experience, and its necessary effect, spiritual sloth and unfaithfulness, must be such as are threatened.—**And repent, and do thy** [the] **first works.** What is thus required is precisely that which a Christian, who has fallen into a low spiritual state must do, with a view to escape out of that condition. There must be change of mind (μετάνοια) "repentance," involving that earnest attention to one's own spiritual state, and earnest purpose of reform, which is always the beginning of good. Following this, or attending it, must be the resumption of neglected duty, the taking up of the cross that had been laid down—a return, in short, to that whole course of Christian living to which the "first love" had prompted, and the abandoning of which was so sure a sign that this love had been "left."—**Else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his** [its] **place, except thou repent.** We are to remember that the words are addressed to a church. In the symbolism of the vision, the Church in Ephesus is represented by one in the group of seven light-holders. The removal of its "candlestick" out of its place, would, of course, signify the extinction of the church. It ceases, thus, to have a place among those that, as churches of Christ, are holding forth in the world the light of life. The threatening had its fulfillment. The Ephesian Church long since ceased to exist, and Ephesus itself is a ruin. The admonition, however, may have availed for a time; for this church was a spiritual home for the aged apostle in his own last days. It shared, nevertheless, the general decline among the churches of the East, and its "candlestick" was long ago "removed."—**But this thou hast.** Gladly does the Lord Jesus recognize and approve what can be approved in his churches. So he here returns to the language of commendation.—**That thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.** There was this remaining and hopeful element of a right spiritual state. The evil and the false were hateful to them. There is still a promise of good in that within us which inclines to the good and which repels the bad.—**Which I also hate.** Thus they were in sympathy with him—Christ-like—at least so far as this, that the mischievous teaching and practice which their Lord so deeply disapproved was disapproved by them. Of the Nicolaitanes, so far as aught can really be known of them, we speak below.

7. PROMISE. Conditioned alike upon the commendation and the admonition, there is a promise; so announced and made so wide in its scope as to furnish no obscure intimation of the fact, that what is addressed to this one church is meant for all churches, and all Christians.—**He that hath an ear, let him hear.** It might not be an undue expansion of the meaning to make the words include every individual of those to whose attention these messages shall in any way or in any divine word, whether of admonition or of counsel, be brought. In what is said in the promise to Christians, there is significance also for those who are not Christians. As for the promise, what it holds forth is what every soul should desire; as for the admonition—"if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It is worth observing that language nearly identical, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," was used by our Lord in his own earthly ministry, in connection with some of his more striking parables (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43). It is an

emphatic intimation that the words spoken, or about to be spoken, should have especial attention.—**What the Spirit saith unto the churches.** There is here a recognition of the fact that the present Dispensation is a dispensation of the Spirit. Jesus had said to his disciples, in closing his own personal ministry, "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). "He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." It is Jesus that in our passage is speaking; but he to whom he speaks is "in the Spirit." The two Divine Persons, as they are one in essence, so are they in perfect accord in their operation. Thus the message is no less what "*the Spirit* saith unto the churches," than what the Lord Jesus says.—**To him that overcometh.** These words occur in connection with the promise that closes each epistle. They are a clear intimation that what every church and every Christian, and every soul that would be saved, has to do, is to "*overcome.*" The victory to be achieved is alike the victory of faith (1 John 5. 4), and the victory of strenuous personal struggle and endeavor. It is worthy of note how consonant the idea and the phraseology in this place are with what we find in other writings of this same apostle, especially his First Epistle as just quoted. It is one of the indications of identity of authorship, since, although it is Jesus who speaks in this place, we must regard him as speaking both *to* and *through* that in him who is the medium of communication, which is characteristic and personal.—**Will I give to eat of the tree of life.** The symbolism is founded upon that which appears in the account of the "garden" that God planted "eastward in Eden," as the home of the first human pair. This striking link of connection between the first book of the inspired Scriptures and the last, shows not only the marked unity of the plan of inspiration, but shows, as well, how far forward that Edenic symbol pointed. Its relation was not merely to the conditions of life in the garden, to the unfallen man; but to a provision to be made in the far-away centuries, and to the fruits of that provision in the eternal life of redeemed souls.—**Which is in the midst of the paradise of God.** The oldest manuscripts—Sinaitic and Vatican—omit the words, "in the midst of" (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ), neither do they have the "my" (μου) after "God" (Θεοῦ), translated "my God," which Stuart and Alford supply. The best reading seems to be, "which is in the paradise of God." This, while it recalls the symbolism in Gen. 2:9, anticipates that which we find in Rev. 22:2, where we shall notice the force of it more particularly. It must suffice to say here that, as cast under this figurative form, the promise is equivalent to that which we have in 1 John 2:25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life"; as also in the words of our Lord himself (John 6:51): "If any man eat of this bread, he shall *live forever.*"

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We have judged it best to analyze each of these seven epistles, in the manner shown above, partly for the sake of a more exact method in the exposition, and partly because, thus alike the resemblances and the differences in the several epistles may be more apparent. The communication in each of these seven messages follows a like order; in which we have, *first*, the title, suggested in the vision as described, by which the august Person speaking announces himself; *second*, an assurance of his omniscient acquaintance with the church addressed, in its spiritual condition, and every peculiarity of its faith and life; *third*, words of commendation; *fourth* (in all save two), words of reproof and admonition; *fifth*, a call to attention, and a promise for "him that overcometh." We make our analysis in the exposition more general, so as to involve fewer particulars; keeping it, however, in substance the same.

The views held as to *the angel of the church* addressed in each of these cases, are mainly two; that which takes the word "angel" in its usual signification, and that which, founding upon the more literal sense of the word (ἄγγελος) "messenger," "legate," views it as simply a term of official designation. It is claimed that the former of these is consistent with Scripture usage; as where our Lord himself says, speaking of "the little ones" (Matt. 18:10): "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," and those places in Daniel (10:21; 12:1); as also in the book we are now studying, where mention is made of "the angel of the waters" (16:5). No one of these cases, however, seems to be analogous to the present one. There

are strong objections, besides, to this view. (1) No consistent reason can be given why through such an angelic medium the churches should be addressed. All else introduced, as connected with these churches, views them as visible organizations, as *actual*, not *ideal*, and as found in their actual condition. The natural medium of communication with them would be those official persons, the pastors, or chief officers, who represented them. (2) It does not seem congruous and consistent that an angelic being should be addressed as if either entitled to the commendation or liable to the blame, even in a representative sense, which are expressed in these messages. (3) The whole subject of angelic ministry, as connected either with individuals or with organizations, is obscure, being mentioned in Scripture but rarely, and never more than in the merest intimation. (4) If the angels of the churches be viewed as angels in the usual sense of the word, and the difficulty alluded to (in 2) above be met by regarding them as symbolizing the churches themselves, then the objection arises which Rothe, as quoted by Hengstenberg, urges: "There would then be one image or symbol used to express another"—the angel as a symbol of the church, and the star as a symbol of the angel. "Besides, the angels and the churches would stand immediately beside each other, and of both it would be spoken in the same sentence, that they are to be understood under the symbols of the stars and the lamps; yet of these two symbolized objects, must one only be a reality, and the other a mere symbol!"

It should be observed, in studying this point, that (1) The "angel of the church" evidently *represents* the church. For in each case, we find in a subsequent part of the message: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith *unto the churches;*" so that what is addressed to the angel of the church, is viewed as addressed to the church. (2) That there were official persons in each church who held this representative position. When Paul (Acts 20:17) would leave with the Church at Ephesus a solemn message, he "sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." His address to them reminds us of the form adopted in the passage under consideration. It was not to the elders as individuals, plainly, that he was speaking; but to the elders as representative persons. (3) We find Paul writing to Timothy (1 Tim 5:17): "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, *especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.*" This shows that there was a distinction among the elders, some of whom were, more than others, devoted to "labor in the word and doctrine." (4) It is well known, and admitted on all hands, that *one* of the elders held a position equivalent to that of the modern pastor, bearing then the designation of "overseer" (ἐπίσκοπος), or "superintendent," involving the duty and responsibility of watching over the affairs of a single and separate organized body of Christians. It is most consistent with all that appears in this connection, to regard this person as the one intended in the phrase, "angel of the church." His position was itself one of peculiar responsibility; so that for what was amiss in the church he would be held to account beyond even those elders who did not "labor in the word and doctrine." In every sense, too, he would represent the church, which would be with special propriety addressed through him. The word "angel" would apply to him in its literal force, as "messenger," "legate." A corresponding usage in the Old Testament is at Malachi 2:7: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge . . . . for he is the messenger, [communicating agent (*malak*)] of the Lord of Hosts," to whom resort may be had for counsel and direction. The Hebrew word, here, corresponds to the Greek "messenger" (ἄγγελος), and is applied to the priest of the ancient sanctuary, in a representative sense akin to that which we find in the passage now before us.

[The question has been raised whether it may be allowed us to admit the possibility that, during the apostle's exile in Patmos he was permitted to receive visits from representatives of the churches planted upon the adjacent coast, so near at hand, and between whom and himself there were so many mutual ties. That he should still have on his heart the "care" of these "churches," and that they should be solicitous to know of his welfare, and have his counsel in their affairs, is beyond doubt. Did an occasional "messenger" of the church—its pastor, or other chief person—visit him? And was the message in each of these cases now considered, supposed to be sent through him?

It is a point which cannot be determined; yet we know of no positive reason why it should be thought impossible.]

It is deserving of remark, as Lyra (quoted by Alford) suggests, that in the commendation in verse 6, our Lord "does not say 'hatest' the Nicolaitanes, but the 'deeds' of the Nicolaitanes; because the persons themselves are to be regarded with charity; their vices only to be hated." The Nicolaitanes are said by Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, Epiphanius, and Jerome, to have been persons led away into a false doctrine and vicious practice by "Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch," mentioned in Acts 6: 5, as one of the Seven appointed by the Church at Jerusalem to relieve the apostles themselves in certain secular matters within the body. They speak of him as a teacher of doctrines encouraging immorality, a species of antinomianism, in which the freedom of the gospel was so abused as to be plead in justification of the worst vices. Other ancient writers say that Nicolas was claimed by these depraved persons as their leader without authority, and simply with a view to gain proselytes through the influence of his name. In the "Apostolical Constitutions," dating back to the fourth and fifth century, this sect is spoken of as "the Nicolaitanes, falsely so called." The sect is referred to again in ver. 15 of this chapter, as existing also at Pergamos, and where, as some think, it is identified with those teaching "the doctrine of Balaam," referred to in the verse preceding. Associating these passages, and claiming to find a resemblance of etymology and meaning between the names Balaam ("Lord of the People," or "Destroyer of the People," Heb.) and Nicolas (Νικόλαος, "Conqueror of the People"), these writers would make the names symbolical, as implying the destructive nature of the teaching condemned. Such a construction seems fanciful and forced, while unnecessary in any consistent exposition of the passage. The more natural view, and, as already intimated, the more strictly historical one, is to regard this sect as undoubtedly holding and practicing the depraved and demoralizing doctrines attributed to them, but as most probably having assumed, as endorsing their "deeds," the name of Nicolas, one of the Seven. The evidence that their leader was actually one of the Seven, is by no means conclusive. That they should be spoken of so severely as in this place and below, in ver. 14, 15, is justified by their character, and the tendency, alike of their teaching and their conduct. Such teaching takes away the very foundation of all morality, and wherever it has appeared, as more than once it has for substance in subsequent history, it has proved itself pernicious and destructive to the last degree. We cannot wonder that our Lord should say of it, "Which thing I hate."

The connection of what is said here with what appears in ver. 2, should be noted, "and how thou canst not bear them which are evil"; also the allusion to those who claimed to be apostles, and were not. This destructive element is not to be regarded as *within* the church, but *without* it. There is no indication that the church gave it even such apparent approval as would have been implied in the fact that members of this sect were allowed to remain in its own body. It was a form of false teaching with which the church was in contact at Ephesus, but with which it had no sympathy.

"Now let it be understood," says Edward Irving, "by every Christian church, that the Lord Jesus Christ is walking in the midst of us; in our assemblies is present, and from the meetings of the elders is not absent—whatever is said, heareth; whatever is done, marketh; yea, and whatever is thought, discerneth full well: for 'he knoweth what is in man, and he needeth not that any should testify of man.' And thus his unwearied travel in the midst of his church, is well designated by his feet of brass, of fine brass; of fine brass which never tarnisheth, but ever shineth, like the pure metal which floweth from the furnace."

"And wherefore," he says in another place, "are these lights of the churches [the seven stars] held in the right hand of the Son of man? . . . To show that they are his, and not their own; that they are borrowed lights, deriving all their power of illumination from him, according to that word, 'This is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'"

8–11. To the Church in Smyrna.

8. Inscription. **Smyrna.** The modern city of Smyrna is about two and a half miles from the site of the ancient one. It has a popu-

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith [a]the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, who [1]was

a ch. 1: 8, 17, 18.—1 Gr. *became.*

lation of one hundred and eighty thousand or one hundred and ninety thousand, three-fourths of them being nominal Christians, including Greek, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches. The old city is said to date from about 1500 B. C., having been then founded by some piratical Greeks. It is on the Ægean Sea, at the bottom of the Hermæan Gulf.—



SMYRNA.

The angel of the church in Smyrna. Was this angel of the church the martyr Polycarp? It is a question which cannot be conclusively answered. Polycarp suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius, in A. D. 168. He had then, as he told the proconsul at his trial, been a Christian "eighty and six" years. This would place his conversion in the year A. D. 82. Between that date and the writing of the Apocalypse, in A. D. 96 or 97, fourteen or fifteen years would have elapsed. What was his age at the time of his death, seems not to be known; we are only told that he suffered martyrdom "in an extreme age." If we might place his age, then, at one hundred, he would be at the date of his conversion fourteen years old, and at the time of John's exile and the writing of the Apocalypse, twenty-eight or twenty-nine. He *may*, certainly, have lived to an age so great, or even greater, and may have even as a young man, been the chief pastor at Smyrna, and so the "angel" through whom this epistle is addressed. But this theory must build upon the two suppositions we have named, for neither of which is there any direct evidence. It is true that in A. D. 108, when Ignatius visited Smyrna, Polycarp was the pastor there. This

9 [a]I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art [b]rich), and *I know* the blasphemy of [c]them which say they are Jews, and are not, [d]but *are* the synagogue of Satan.
10 [e]Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: [f]be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee [g]a crown of life.

9 dead, and lived *again:* I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the [1]blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and they are not,
10 but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; [2]and ye shall have [3]tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the

a ver. 2....*b* Luke 12: 21; 1 Tim. 6: 18; James 2: 5.....*c* Rom. 2: 17, 28, 29; 9, 6....*d* ch. 3: 9.....*e* Matt. 10: 22....*f* Matt. 24: 13...
g James 1: 12; ch. 3: 11.—1 Or, *reviling*....2 Some ancient authorities read, *and may have*....3 Gr. *a tribulation of ten days.*

would be only eleven or twelve years after the writing of the Apocalypse. Tertullian states that Polycarp was placed by John at the head of the Church in Smyrna. Irenæus implies much the same, while Eusebius expressly states that he was "appointed by the apostles bishop of the Church in Smyrna." It will thus be seen that there is a possibility, perhaps even a probability, as Hengstenberg thinks, that "the angel of the Church in Smyrna" was indeed the saintly Polycarp, himself a disciple of the apostle John. Nothing in the way of exposition, however, can be founded upon a probability so slender.—**These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.** Upon these words, as occurring substantially at 1: 18, we have already commented. In this case, as in each of these messages to the churches, a fitness is seen, in those divine attributes asserted of him who speaks, to the tenor of that which follows. Not only was the Church at Smyrna already suffering on account of its faith and fidelity, but more and deeper suffering was in store. He who now addresses it has known in his own person what it is to suffer, "even unto death"; and not only so, but even in that suffering and that death he demonstrated his divine superiority to both, and especially when that life which he laid down, he "took again" by his own power. Such an one is he in whose name these faithful ones face the sore "tribulation" present and to come. Surely, they may trust him, even to the end. If we may suppose that the angel of the church in this case was Polycarp himself, the words have all the more of affecting appropriateness.

9, 10. COMMENDATION AND ASSSURANCE. **I know thy works and tribulation.** Critics are not agreed whether the words, "thy works," should be retained or omitted. The revisers, as is seen above, omit them. Tischendorf, in his first edition of the New Testament text, retains them. They are found in the Sinaitic manuscript; as also in the Syriac Version. In his later editions, however, he omits them, in reliance, it would seem, upon the testimony of the Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Bezæ, Codex Porphyrianus, and the Vulgate and Coptic Versions, where they are not found. Hengstenberg, Düsterdieck, and Alford also omit. Stuart retains them. They should, probably, be thrown out, as an interpolation by some copyist, who inferred, from the fact that they occur in all other of these addresses to the churches, that they should be inserted also here. The omission might be thought required by the tenor of this message to the Church in Smyrna, which is so exclusively one of commendation and encouragement, the warning words, therefore, "I know thy works," being out of place. As will be seen, however, the oldest manuscripts make a like omission in the message to the Church in Pergamos, where severe reproof is found. [With ℵ, B. containing them, I should rather say because it is easier to account for their insertion than for their omission.—A. H.] If they are thrown out, either here or there, as probably they ought to be in both places, it must be upon the authority of the manuscripts alone. We should then read, "I know thy tribulation," etc. The "tribulation" (θλῖψιν) spoken of here, as also in 1: 9, "Your brother and companion in tribulation", must be taken as meaning more than tribulation in that general sense which applies to all who have experience of the usual trials of earthly life. The word means tribulation of a special sort, such as oppression, persecution, affliction of some peculiar kind. brings. It thus anticipates in some degree what is more expressly intimated below—the imprisonment and death in ver. 10, where the same word again occurs.—**And poverty.** It is "poverty" in the strict sense, and as a result of the tribulation which this church was suffering, and was yet to suffer.—**But thou art rich.** In "durable riches and righteous-

11 [a]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of [b]the second death.

11 crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

a ver. 7; ch. 13:9....b ch. 20:14; 21:8.

ness"; treasure in heaven.—**And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not.** There is an Israel after the flesh, and also a true Israel, as Paul was accustomed to teach. The promises made to the fathers were, in their highest sense, for the latter only, though the former have always claimed them. The same distinction is made here. Those who said they were Jews based their claim upon nationality, as if that included all; yet it was blasphemy in them—a dishonor to God, in which the essence of blasphemy appears—to assert this exclusive claim to the privileges of the people of God, while at the same time by their wickedness bringing contempt upon the very name they bore. When Polycarp suffered martyrdom, the Jews were especially violent against him, eagerly accusing him before the magistrate and carrying faggots for the fire.—**But are the synagogue of Satan.** Trench, in "New Testament Synonyms," (P. 1) in comparing "church" (ἐκκλησία) and "synagogue" (συναγωγὴ), terms the former the nobler word. In quoting him, Alford points out that the latter is used only once in the New Testament with a Christian application (James 2:2), where our version translates it "assembly." The expression "synagogue of Satan" shows how degenerate and perverse Judaism had become. —**Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.** *Which thou art about to suffer —art on the point of suffering.* The words indicate that the suffering alluded to was near at hand. The nature of the suffering is shown in what follows.—**Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison.** The real source of the spirit of persecution is thus pointed out. Kings, and magistrates, and popes, when they become persecutors, are simply instruments of him who is "the accuser of the brethren," a "murderer from the beginning."—**That ye may be tried.** It seems to be agreed by the best commentators that these words do not allude to the purpose of God in *permitting*, but the purpose of Satan in *instigating* the persecution. "That ye may be tried" (πειρασθῆτε) will then mean, "that ye may be tempted." Satan and wicked men were thus confederate in a scheme to crush the Christian religion, by methods of intimidation and violence. The temptation lay in that dread of a violent and painful death which is so natural, and with some so intense.—**And ye shall have tribulation ten days.** The words, "ten days," must not be taken as indicating any exact period of time, but (1) that the persecution shall have a limit, and (2) that the term of it while not very short, shall also not be very long. It is not unusual in Scripture for a definite number to be thus used for an indefinite one.—**Be thou faithful unto death.** We must not read "until death," but "even unto death"; that is, not be turned from fidelity by death itself.—**And I will give thee a crown of life.** Does the word "crown" (στέφανον) mean a *diadem*, such as kings wear, or the *garland*, given as a prize to victors in the ancient games? It seems more consistent with the idea in the word "overcometh," in ver. 11, to take the word "crown" in the latter sense. The imagery in the overcoming we take to be the same as that employed so often by Paul, when he speaks of the Christian life under the figure of the contest for a prize. This was the classical Greek usage, as in the case of the oration by Demosthenes upon "the crown." The crown of life must be the eternal life itself; as if he had said, "I will give thee a crown, even life."

11. Promise. He that hath an ear, let him hear, etc.—It is unnecessary to comment again upon these words as here repeated.—**He that overcometh.** As implied above, we take the overcoming to be, not that of conquest, or kingly acquisition; but such as that of an athlete striving for the prize.—**Shall not be hurt of the second death.** The double negative in the Greek (οὐ μὴ) has an emphatic force, indicating the absolute certainty of that which is promised. We might translate, "shall certainly not, etc." The second death must be that which follows the death of the body, which is the first death. In ch. 20:14 of this book, this second death is described as "the lake of fire."

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith [a]he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write;
These things saith he that hath the sharp two-

[a] ch. 1:16.

Under this fearful imagery the condition of souls finally lost is represented. The promise here is, that those who in their fidelity do not shrink from even that death which wicked persecutors were about to inflict, under the instigations of Satan, shall have sure deliverance from that other more fearful death—the death of the soul. Instead, they shall receive "the crown of life." We are not to understand that by such fidelity they procured salvation to themselves; but that such fidelity was a testimony to the genuineness of that faith in Christ, through which, as united to him, they became partakers in the salvation he achieved for them and in them. In a later age, the crown of martyrdom was too much regarded as certain to become the crown of life. This was the effect of confounding the evidence of being in a state of salvation with that state of salvation itself.



PERGAMOS.

12-17. TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

12. INSCRIPTION. Pergamos (or Pergamum, both forms are found). This city, under the name of Pergama, has now a population of between twenty and thirty thousand, of whom about two thousand are nominal Christians. Anciently, the city—which must not be confounded with Pergamos, the citadel of Troy—was noted for three things: its wealth, its literary distinction, and its idolatry. The art of preparing skins for writing was here improved to such an extent, that the name of the city was given to that species of manufacture, which, as *parchment*, this product still bears. There was here a library of two hundred thousand volumes, or parchment rolls, carried afterward, by Mark Antony, to Alexandria, in Egypt, as a present to Queen Cleopatra, and centuries later (A. D. 642), destroyed along with the celebrated Alexandrine Library, by the caliph Omar. (So Dr. Schaff states; others claim that the library was destroyed by certain fanatical Christians, in A. D. 391). Pergamos was also noted for the prominence it gave to the worship of the god Æsculapius. Other deities, however, were in like manner

13 a I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* b where Satan's seat *is:* and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

13 edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days 1 of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was

a ver. 2....b ver. 9.—1 The Greek text here is somewhat uncertain.

worshiped; a group of famous temples standing in a grove near the city, dedicated to Jupiter, Minerva, Apollo, Venus, and Bacchus, as well as another to the favorite deity, Æsculapius.—**These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.** In the address to the Church in Smyrna, those characteristics of the manifestation of our Lord in the vision are named, which invite and encourage trust; here those which remind that the Redeemer is also the Judge. Mention of the two-edged sword occurs again, in ver. 16 below, where it is termed "the sword of my mouth." The allusion is, plainly, to that feature of the vision (1:16): "and out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword." In commenting upon the words there we referred to the passage in Heb. 4: 12: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. As already pointed out, the reference must be to the severity of that scrutiny in which the Lord "tries" those especially, who bear his name and represent him before the world.

13. Commendation. **Thy works.** Upon grounds identical with those given above, upon ver. 9, these words must be here omitted. [The manuscript evidence for them is weaker than in ver. 9, being, of the principal uncials, only B, while ℵ, A, C, P, omit them.—A. H.]—**I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.** Various reasons have been assigned for characterizing Pergamos as "Satan's seat," or "throne" (θρόνος), as the word might with more exactness be rendered. Some have assumed that Æsculapius was worshiped there under the form of a serpent, the symbol of Satan. But it is uncertain whether even the fact was as supposed. Others have found in the words some allusion to the pernicious influence of the famous library, with its pagan literature, its false philosophy, and its encouragement to idolatry. The more simple and likely interpretation finds in the words, "Satan's seat," an allusion to the persecution which had already found a victim in the faithful Antipas, and to what has already been said in ver. 10, of such persecution as of Satanic instigation. As a city full of idolatry, and already noted for its antichristian hatred and violence, Pergamos might in fact well be characterized as a place where Satanic influence, and Satan himself, had an especial dwelling-place.—**And thou holdest fast my name.** "Dost not swerve from the profession of faith in my name," that is, "in me." The Pergamean Church was not blameless, as the reproof below clearly indicates; but there was this reason for commendation—that it had not been driven to deny the Lord even by the cruel violence with which one of those composing it had been visited.—**And hast not denied my faith** [*didst not deny faith in me*] **even in those days** [omit "even"] **wherein Antipas** [*was*] **my faithful martyr** [better, *my martyr*, or *witness; the faithful one.*] There is nothing farther to be said of Antipas than that he had already suffered for his faith, as among the first of those who had thus sealed their fidelity even unto death. Various fanciful theories have been proposed for identifying him with known historical persons. Thus Hengstenberg thinks, "it will not be reckoned too bold if we should hazard the supposition that Timothy was the person here designated Antipas. The two names, 'Fear God' (Τιμόθεος) and 'Against All' (Ἀντί πᾶς) are closely connected with each other. One cannot truly fear God without standing forth against the world, which lies in wickedness, and having it also standing against us." Why the faithful martyr should have been called Antipas, rather than by his own proper name, it would be difficult to show. There was a tradition in the early church that Antipas (this being his real name) was the bishop, or pastor, of the Church in Pergamos, and that he suffered martyrdom for his fidelity, after arriving at a great age. There is nothing, however, concerning him, which can be depended upon as history; and the place of history, in sound interpretation, can never be taken by con-

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of [a]Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, [b]to eat things sacrificed unto idols, [c]and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine [d]of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and [e]will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

14 killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to com-
15 mit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold
16 the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my

a Num. 24:14; 25:1; 31:16; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11....b ver. 20; Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 8:9, 10; 10:19, 20....c 1 Cor. 6:13, etc....d ver. 6.....e Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8; ch. 1:16; 19:15, 21.

jecture, nor by fanciful theories as to the signification of names.—**Who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.** This repeats the attribution of the persecuting spirit, with all it instigates, to Satan, and shows, also, in what sense Antipas was a faithful martyr. It is deserving of notice that Jesus terms him "*my* faithful martyr."

14-16. REPROOF AND ADMONITION. **I have a few things against thee.** The phrase, "a few things," is not to be taken as depreciating the importance of this which is soon to be mentioned in terms of reproof; but only as suggesting that the things to be blamed were few, in comparison with the things to be approved. Though "few," they were, nevertheless, of vital consequence, as soon appears.—**Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.** —Those who resembled Balaam in their own conduct, and in the practices which they both indulged and encouraged. It is clearly implied that these persons were *in* the Pergamean Church, and tolerated there. This marks a point of material difference between this church and the Church at Ephesus, which, though it had declined in spirituality, still did not allow pernicious errors of this kind in its own body.—**Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel.** This "counsel of Balaam" is mentioned at Num. 31:16, where we find Moses saying to "the officers of the host," and in allusion to the women of Moab and Midian: "Behold these caused the children of Israel, *through the counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord," etc. It is true that Balak's name is not mentioned here; yet as the previous history shows the two in confederacy against Israel, and as the king would be the most natural person to confer with upon a matter of policy like this, the necessary implication is that to Balak Balaam gave his iniquitous counsel. What is thus implied in the Scripture narrative, Josephus (Ant. iv., 6, 6), expressly states, viz., that when leaving Balak, after what is narrated in Num. 23 and 24, Balaam gave this advice to Balak and to the princes of Midian. The advice was that the Moabite and Midianite women should be used as instruments to draw the Israelites into idolatrous practices, and into other forms of criminal intercourse; that thus they might incur the divine anger and be cut off in punishment.—**To eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.** That is, to join with these heathen tribes in idolatrous feasts with the accompanying immoralities. There were those at Pergamos, and even in the Pergamean Church, who justified and encouraged like intercourse on the part of Christians with the heathen in that city.

15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which things I hate. The words, "which things I hate," are not in either the Sinaitic or the Alexandrine manuscript. Tischendorf, therefore, omits them. In place of "which I hate" (ὁ μισῶ), ℵ, A, B, C, and other manuscripts have, "in like manner" (ὁμοίως). How the change was made in copying is clear from the resemblance in form of the words, and from the fact of the occurrence of the former phrase in a similar connection above. The verse should read: "So hast thou also in like manner them that hold the doctrine (or teaching) of the Nicolaitanes." The "in like manner" here, must refer to ancient Israel, and the sin, as just described, into which it fell. Just as, through the iniquitous confederacy of the false prophet Balaam and the heathen king Balak, Israel was drawn into the sin mentioned, so in Pergamos there were those, the Nicolaitanes, who encouraged the very same practices. These Nicolaitanes, in the allusion to Balaam, seem to be spoken of generally, while as Nicolaitanes they are mentioned by the name they actually bore.

16. Repent; or else I will come unto

17 [a]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone [b]a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

17 mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

a ver. 7: 11....*b* ch. 3: 12; 19: 12.

thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Not against the church, but "against *them*," although it is not to be supposed that the church, if continuing to tolerate so great a wrong in its own body, would escape. The words, "sword of my mouth," make clear the meaning of this symbolical feature of the vision of the Lord as described in ch. 1: 16. He will come in a visitation of judgment and punishment.

17. Promise. **The hidden manna.** The allusion is twofold; to that "bread from heaven" which "Moses gave" — or God through Moses—in the wilderness; and to that preserved portion of the manna which was kept so long after in the Ark of the Covenant.—**And will give him a white stone.** We prefer, upon the whole, to regard the allusion here as classic, and not Hebraic, as in the case of the manna. Or rather, it may be treated as both the one and the other; since there is no reason why the practice referred to may not have been general, and among Jews as well as Gentiles. This was the practice, as Alford, following Bengel and Düsterdieck, states it, "of using small stones, inscribed with writing, for various purposes"; or, as Hengstenberg: "The antiquarian element that comes here into consideration is simply the fact that in ancient times they were wont to write much on small stones. To the new glorious name," he adds, "corresponds the white stone." Dr. Vaughan, late of the Middle Temple in London, says: "I suppose a new, clean, bright stone, unused before, with something cut upon it; a new name, intelligible only to the owner, a secret between him and the giver, a name of honor and of happiness, a promotion and a glory to the bearer, in which none can intermeddle, and of which none can deprive him. I would understand the promise thus simply, and not lose myself in a multitude of conflicting ideas which the words, taken singly, might introduce." Various ancient customs have been singled out by different writers, as alluded to in the mention of the white stone; as the *tessera*—given to the victor in the Olympic games—a stone on which was inscribed the reward he should receive from his native city; the white and black balls used by the Greeks in pronouncing the acquittal or condemnation of persons on trial; the stones in the breastplate of the Jewish high-priest, etc. It is better to take the allusion as a general one, without attempting to fix specific meanings that are no way indicated in the text.—**And in** [upon] **the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.** The "new name" we take to be the name of the person to whom the white stone is given. Of the significance of this whole promise, with its striking and beautiful imagery, we speak below.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

No reason, quite satisfactory, it would appear, suggests itself why Pergamos should have had the evil eminence spoken of in the first part of this message, or letter. The mention of it as "Satan's throne," clearly implies that in that whole region it was noted as a centre of antichristian influence, manifesting itself in persecution. No particular form of idolatrous worship can have been the cause of this, as Ephesus was quite as much devoted to the worship of Diana, as Pergamos to that of Æsculapius. As a pagan literary centre it may have been the more predisposed to resist Christianity; yet there seems in this fact no especial reason why this resistance should assume a violent form. The fact named was probably due to sinister *personal* influence of some kind.

Hengstenberg, in arguing for his view that Antipas must be understood as a name for Timothy, with a symbolical meaning in it, observes that "all other names in the Apocalypse are symbolical." This is certainly a mistake. The names of these seven churches are surely not so. The names of Balaam and Balak, occurring almost in the connection, are at least historical names; and it is by no means clear that either of them is used in

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, [a] who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass.
19 [b] I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto
19 burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and [1] patience, and that thy

a ch. 1: 14, 15....b ver. 2.—1 Or, *stedfastness.*

this place in any other than a plain, historical sense. The mention of Antipas, as a person bearing this name, in the traditions of the early church, favors the view that the name must be taken here just as it stands; which is also the safer course, and far more consistent with the rules of sound interpretation.

In connection with "the hidden manna" and "the white stone," arises a question as to the exact force of the word, "overcometh." Shall it be taken as alluding to the final overcoming of the Christian believer, as he enters heaven? Or does it, at least, include the overcoming of ripening Christian experience in the present life? It is quite clear that the watchfulness and the spiritual struggle enjoined in the admonitions of this message to this church, as also in each of the others, is a present one. Temptation, hindrance, spiritual exposure in many kinds, are the subject of the warning, and the injunction is that these shall be encountered and overcome. The phrase itself, also, in the Greek properly means, "to him who is conquering," engaged in a conflict not yet ended, though overcoming. There is to be, in each case no doubt, a final overcoming, but also one in the present time. It seems to us that the whole meaning of this rich passage is adequately seized only as we view it in application to the entire course of a Christian's experience from the moment of his conversion, on to the consummation of his Christian life in heaven. Thus "the hidden manna" will mean the spiritual sustenance, comfort, inspiration, which a Christian realizes in his progress in divine life, in usefulness, and in meetness for heaven—especially communion with his Saviour, who said of himself, "I am that bread from heaven"—and which reaches its highest perfection in the final saved state. It is "hidden," as being so entirely unknown to the world, and even comprehensible only through experience.

In like manner "the white stone" should be viewed as *the personal evidence* a Christian has, given him in conversion, and intended to be cherished by him all his life after as the testimony and pledge of his acceptance "in the Beloved." The name written there is his own name; that no one knoweth it save himself, alludes to the fact that the personal evidence of a Christian soul is a matter so entirely between that soul and its Saviour, and *in its essence* so incommunicable to any other. In the final overcoming, "the hidden manna," upon foretastes of which his spiritual life here has been sustained, becomes the fullness and perfection of heavenly good; and "the white stone," that personal assurance of faith and hope which has sustained him in many a conflict of temptation and doubt, becomes the complete assurance of *fulfilled* divine promise and pledge.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said—
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

18-28. TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

18. INSCRIPTION. **The Son of God.** In the vision he is described as "one like unto the Son of man." Here he terms himself "the Son of God." We view him aright, therefore, only as we see in him both these—the God-man.—**Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire.** As in the other cases, that feature of the vision (1:13-16) is chosen which has an especial fitness to the tenor of the message. The symbolism implies that *searching* and *consuming* divine observation in which the evil in men is both seen as it is, and requited as it deserves.—**And his feet are like fine brass.** Düsterdieck says: "The two descriptions, taken from 1: 14, 15, have their meaning in this: that the Lord with his flaming eye perfectly perceives [pierces straight through, *richtig durchdringt*] all things, and with his feet like brass tramples down everything unclean and hostile [*alles Unreine und Feindselige zertritt*]."

19. COMMENDATION. **I know thy works, and charity** [love], **and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and**

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman [a]Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants [b]to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

20 last works are more than the first. But I have *this* against thee, that thou sufferest [1]the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication,

a 1 Kings 16: 31; 21: 25; 2 Kings 9: 7....*b* Ex. 34: 15; Acts 15: 20, 29; 1 Cor. 10: 19, 20; ver. 14.——1 Many authorities, some ancient, read *thy wife.*

the last to be more than the first. As Tischendorf finally settles the text, the translation should stand: "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and patience; and thy last works [to be] more than the first." In the common version the clause, "thy works," is repeated in a way, mainly through a false punctuation, to make the reason and force of the repetition altogether obscure. Some manuscripts omit the word for "service"; but Tischendorf retains it, placing it, however, after faith, instead of before it. The "works" specified, therefore, stand in groups—love and faith, service and patience. These seem to be the works alluded to, the specifications being epexegetical, or explanatory, as if the phrase read, "I know thy works, *even* thy love," etc. We should read "love" (ἀγάπην) instead of "charity," which latter word has acquired a meaning, implied indeed in the Greek one, but by no means properly expressing it. The last part of the verse indicates that the Church in Thyatira was found in a condition contrasted with that at Ephesus. There the "love," with its attendant spiritual graces, no doubt—to some extent, at least—had declined. Here they had increased, rather, so that the "last works," the love, faith, service, patience, were "more than the first," more than at the beginning.

20-23. Reproof and Threatening. **Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee.** Here, again, the manuscripts differ; some reading, "I have a few things," some, "I have much," others, simply, "I have against thee," meaning, "I have *this* against thee." This is the reading of the Alexandrine and Vatican manuscripts, together with C and P, which Tischendorf here follows. — **Because** [that] **thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.** There may be danger of making too much of the fact that the evil noted in the Church at Thyatira is symbolized under the name of a woman. There may be no other reason for this than that Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was an instrument in leading the ancient Israel into the same evil practices into which, by the instigation of Balaam and Balak, the people had fallen while on their wilderness journey, so long



THYATIRA.

21 And I gave her space [a] to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

21 and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to
22 repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of [1] her works.

[a] Rom. 2: 4; ch. 9: 20.—[1] Many ancient authorities read *their*.

before, and which now characterized the sect of the Nicolaitanes. As indicated below, this same disgraceful and pernicious sect had appeared at Thyatira. There can be no harm, however, in noting as a matter of history that the first Thyatiran Christian of whom we read was a woman. It is related in Acts 16: 14, 15, how Lydia, "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," when the Lord opened her heart under the preaching of Paul at Philippi, was converted, and became, as the narrative shows, a zealous and active disciple. Thyatira had been founded by a Macedonian colony; and by this fact and the relations hence naturally subsisting between Thyatira and Philippi, the presence of Lydia in the latter place is explained. She was there, however, as is evident, for purposes of trade alone, and not as a change of home. Hence, as Conybeare and Howson say: "The direct influence of Lydia may be supposed to have contributed more to the establishment of the Church at Thyatira, addressed by St. John, than to that of Philippi, which received the letter of St. Paul." Whether Lydia, returning to her Asiatic home, actually founded there the Church of Thyatira, cannot, of course, be directly inferred from any of these circumstances; yet the probability of it may perhaps be assumed. To identify Lydia herself with Jezebel of our present text, as is done by Heinrich, quoted by Düsterdieck, is to violate all the probabilities of the case—the whole account of the conversion of Lydia indicating the reality of her devotion to the truth. It would seem much more likely that those better elements in the church of which such approving mention is made in ver. 19, were due to her personal influence. We must think, however, that the name Jezebel as here used, indicates, not so much a sect, as *a person*, as will be noticed in the comment upon ver. 22 below. Some manuscripts have, instead of "the woman, or that woman, (*τὴν γυναῖκα*)," "thy wife, (*τὴν γυναῖκα σου*)." Hengstenberg and Alford prefer this latter reading; Tischendorf and Düsterdieck the former. It seems to us the safer reading to follow.—**Which calleth herself a prophetess.** This person, evidently, made pretensions to divine inspiration. As at Ephesus the false teachers called themselves "apostles," so this one at Thyatira called herself a prophetess. At a time when the presence of inspired men in the churches was even still, to some extent, enjoyed, and when the memory and effect of the apostolic ministry as a whole was still vivid, false teachers would gain most ready access to the confidence of the people by pretending to a like inspiration.—**To teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.** The identity of this with what was occurring at Ephesus and Smyrna, is evident at a glance.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. The reading of the Sinaitic manuscript is: "And I gave her space [*time, opportunity*] that she might repent; and she is not willing to repent of her fornication." The difference in the readings is partly in the order of the clauses in the sentence, and partly in the change of tense in the last clause. The words indicate the divine long-suffering, as exercised even toward one whose influence was so pernicious and dishonoring.

22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. The language here seems quite clearly to show that the name Jezebel is used for a person, rather than for a sect, or for a party in the church. Those associated with the sect, would, of course, be those composing the sect—that is to say, the very sect itself. The distinction, therefore, which the words, "those who commit adultery with her" imply, can be a real one, only as we suppose the name Jezebel to be used for the leader of the sect, and, as indicated above, a woman. The word "adultery" in the passage must be taken in part, no doubt, in the spiritual sense so common, especially in the Old Testament, as in Ezek. 23: 37: "With

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that [a] I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and [b] I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; [c] I will put upon you none other burden.
25 But [d] that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come.
26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth [e] my works unto the end, [f] to him will I give power over the nations:

23 And I will kill her children with [1] death; and all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of
24 you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other bur-
25 den. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I
26 come. And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority

[a] 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Chr. 28:9; 29:17; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; Jer. 11:20; 17. 10; 20:12; John 2:24; 25; Acts 1: 24; Rom. 8:27. ....[b] Ps. 62:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:5; ch. 20:12.....[c] Acts 15:28....[d] ch. 3 11....[e] John 6: 29; 1 John 3:23....[f] Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30; 1 Cor. 6:3; ch. 3:21; 20:4.—[1] Or, *pestilence*.

their idols have they committed adultery"; that is to say, in the sense of forbidden intercourse of those professing to be the Lord's people with idolaters, or rather, their own idolatrous practices. Still, lewd vices seem to have been among the things encouraged and practiced by this sect, under the instigation of its leader. Continuance in those things, it is threatened, shall be visited with punishment. As Bengel says: "From the bed of infamy they shall be brought to a sick-bed of pain." The true reading is: "If they do not repent of her [not *their*] works," or deeds. They are to repent, not, of course, *for* her; but on account of their own participation *with her* in the evil condemned.

23. And I will kill her children with [lit. "*in*"] **death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.** It is a question whether in speaking of "her children," here, any distinction is implied, as indicating a class different from those spoken of in the previous verse; that is, whether by those threatened in ver. 22 shall be understood such in the church as allowed these practices to go unrebuked, and by those mentioned in ver. 23 such as were members of this sect, or party, itself, and so, in a sense, children of this new Jezebel. To some extent this distinction may be a just one. The former verse may include all who in any manner favor or suffer this enormity in the Thyatiran community; the latter, those who are more intimately associated with, and partakers in, the evil itself. The object of the punishment, especially in the former case, will be disciplinary and corrective; that "all the churches" may "know" that one reigns in Zion who "is of purer eyes"—for his eyes are "as a flame of fire"—than to behold with approbation, or to tolerate such wickedness. He "searcheth the reins and hearts"—"a designation," says Alford, "for the whole inner parts of man." The concluding words of the verse cover the whole connection of the passage, and are an admonition that upon this principle the Church at Thyatira, and all the churches, must expect to be dealt with.

24-29. THE PROMISE. But unto you I say, etc. The more correct translation, according to the amended text, will stand thus: *But unto you I say, to the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not* [hold not] *this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden*—connecting the verse following (25) with this—*except* [this] *what ye have, hold fast till I come.*—The word "and" in the common version, "and unto the rest"—is not in the Greek, and besides, gives a wrong impression. The second clause in the verse, "to the rest," etc., is explanatory of the first, being in apposition with it. The faithful ones in Thyatira are the "you," the phrase, "the rest in Thyatira," being in apposition. They accordingly receive this charge, simply, that "whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (PHIL. 3:16). By "burden" must be meant simply *charge, injunction;* not that this implies what is burdensome, but only that it is contrasted with what is appointed to the unfaithful. The words, "till I come," or, "till I shall come," can have specific reference to our Lord's second coming only so far as this, that here as elsewhere that coming is set forth as the ultimate objective point of Christian anticipation.

26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end. The latter part of this clause suggests the breadth of meaning implied in the "overcoming." To

27 [a]And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father.
28 And I will give him [b]the morning star.
29 [c]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

27 over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of [1]iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to
28 shivers; as I also have received of my Father: and
29 I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

a Ps. 2: 8, 9; 49: 14; Dan. 7: 22; ch. 12: 5; 19: 15....b 2 Pet. 1: 19; ch. 22: 16....c ver. 7.——1 Or, *iron; as vessels of the potter, are they broken.*

overcome, is not simply to triumph at last, but, as in a very important sense conditional to this, to overcome daily and continuously, by keeping the Lord's "works"—faithfully following and obeying—"unto the end."—**To him will I give power over the nations.** A distinction should be made, here, between the Greek "power" (ἐξουσία) in the sense of *authority* (which is the word in this place) and "power" (δύναμις) in the sense of *force*, or strength. With this should be taken the proper emphasis of the Greek in what follows.

27. And he shall rule [*shepherd*] ποιμανεῖ **them.** The true sense and scope of the passage is also better seen by still connecting these words with the concluding words of the verse, **as I have received of my Father.** That is to say, that "power," authority, which the Son has received of the Father "over the nations," by which must be meant the world as distinct from the kingdom of grace, he imparts to, or shares with, those who "keep" his "works," who are "with" him, and gather with him (Matt. 12: 30).—**With a rod of iron.** The word here "rod" (ῥάβδος), is the same which the Septuagint uses in the twenty-third Psalm, "thy rod and thy staff." In that place the word translated "staff" does not mean that which we commonly indicate by the shepherd's staff, but rather the staff, or cane used for support in walking. The "rod" is that staff of the shepherd which is the symbol of his rule over the flock. So here. The "rod" is simply the shepherd's staff, as is further indicated by the word "shall shepherd" (ποιμανεῖ) already noticed. It is a staff of "iron" as indicating the severity of the rule thus symbolized. Not, however, the severity of mere force, least of all of force exercised in the mere interest of authority; not the rule of the despot, but of the shepherd.—**As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.** Which only means, so far as they oppose themselves to his advancing kingdom. Their resistance shall be completely overcome, and the hostile forces they use in their opposition shall be "broken to shivers." This is in some sense repeating the idea in verse 18. The feet of brass are to trample down enmity and resistance. The breaking to pieces will be by the Lord's own divine power; but this power will work *through his people*, and thus, to them, the instruments, he imparts this power. This is a part of their reward, in the overcoming.

28. And I will give him the morning star. It is better to connect this with former words of promise, as in verse 7, or in verse 17, especially the promise of "the white stone" in the latter, than with Isa. 14: 12, or even with Rev. 22: 16. In the latter place, Christ says of himself: "I am . . . . the bright and the morning star." It is a forced interpretation, to make our present passage anticipatory of a symbolism occurring so much later in the book; besides that, it is inconsistent with the general style of the symbolism here, to make the words before us equivalent to, "I will give him *myself*." It is more fitting, every way, to understand the words, "I will give him the morning star," as referring, like the other words, "I will give him a white stone," to some special characteristic of Christian experience, so precious as to be accounted the rich reward of fidelity. So viewing it, the symbolism becomes less obscure. The morning star is the signal of the dawn, the herald and promise of the full day. To him that overcometh shall be given, in personal experience, that spiritual assurance and satisfaction which shall be to him light out of the darkness, the forerunner and pledge of "the perfect day." The thought may also be included to which Düsterdieck points, when he says: "The conqueror shines in the brightness of the morning star, because he has it in his possession, just as the precious jewel lends its own brightness to him who wears it."

He that hath an ear, let him hear, etc. In this and the remainder of these messages to the churches, the call to attention is placed after, instead of before, the concluding words of promise, as in the three first.

CHAPTER III.

AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he [a]that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; [b]I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, [c]and art dead.

1 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.

a ch. 1: 4, 16; 4: 5; 5: 6....*b* ch. 2: 2....*c* Ephes. 2: 1, 5; 1 Tim. 5: 6.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

The introduction of the name Jezebel, in allusion to the wife of Ahab, and the possible connection of Lydia with the early history of the Thyatiran Church, are suggestive of the very considerable power, for evil or for good, which women have had in history, and not least of all in the history of the church. Instances will readily occur to those familiar even in a moderate degree with this history, and need not be cited here. The special mention made, however, in the Acts, of the conversion of Lydia and her household, seems to warrant us in assuming a significance for that incident not wholly foreign to the present subject. If the active share which Lydia may have had in the founding of the Church at Thyatira, by making female influence prominent in the early history of that church, to some extent opened a way for the pretended "prophetess" who brought in a heresy so pernicious, we may at the same time believe that a more direct effect of that influence would be the fidelity in resisting this heresy, on the part of faithful ones in the church, which receives from the Lord such emphatic commendation.

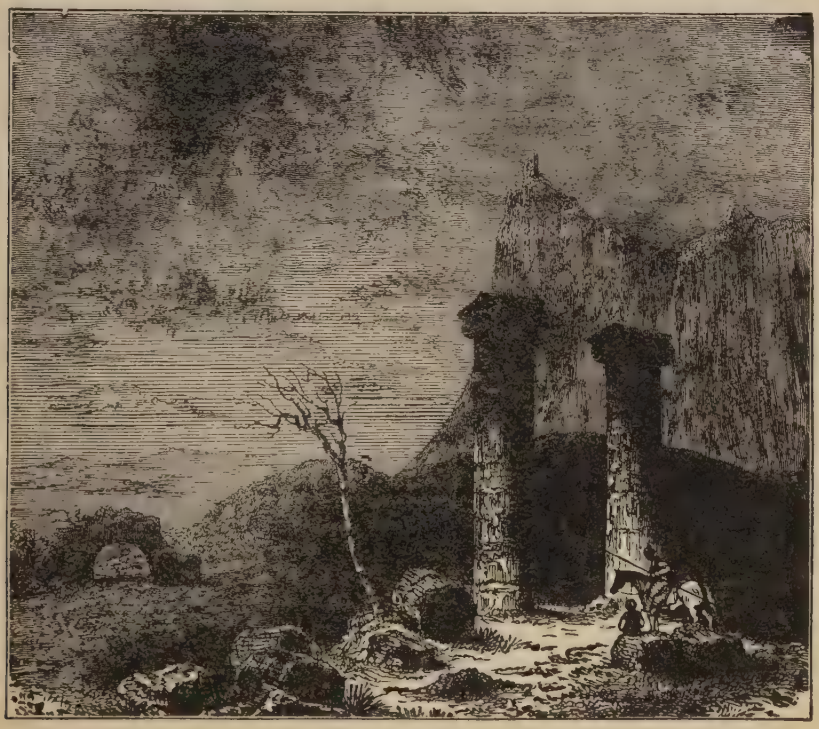
We have not particularly noticed, in the exposition, the words, "the depths of Satan, as they speak," or "as they say," or "are accustomed to speak." An expression of Irenæus, alluding to the Gnostic heretics of which those here referred to seem to have been a kind of forerunners, has been quoted in this connection: *Qui* (that is, the Gnostics) *profundo Bythi adinvenisse se dicunt; "who say that they have reached the depths of the abyss,* (βύθος)"; that is, have sounded the depths of attainable human knowledge. With the word used by Irenæus (βύθος), is associated the word "depths" (τὰ βαθέα), of our text. These are here called "the depths of Satan." The words, "as they say," appear to indicate that members of this sect were accustomed to claim for themselves a deeper knowledge than had been attained by others, and to justify their evil practices upon the ground that they had ascertained through this deeper knowledge justification for such practices to which the ordinary superficial Christian had not yet come. It was like those pagan "mysteries," admission to which was claimed to secure knowledge and privilege of this same nature. These were by the Thyatiran heretics called "the depths." Depths they were—but "depths of Satan."

We find coming before us, repeatedly, in these messages to the churches, that union with himself into which the Lord brings his people. It is made prominent again, here, in ver. 26, 27. This "power over the nations" is "as I received of my Father"; meaning, undoubtedly, that what he so receives he communicates. But the method of the communication should be especially noticed. Nor need this be any mystery to us, in this age of the world. The triumphs of Christianity, while achieved through the divine efficiency of the ascended Jesus, are achieved instrumentally through his people. *His* power is in *them;* alike the authority (ἐξουσία) and the ability (δύναμις). The nations, it should also be noticed, are "broken to shivers "only so far as they are hostile to the Lord's own spiritual kingdom. It is the element of hostility and resistance in them that is thus "broken." In all other respects, Christianity and Christian influence are a blessing to "the nations" themselves. This is implied in the word "govern," "shepherd" (ποιμανεῖ). It is government, the exertion of power, and of power irresistible, yet with designs such as those with which the shepherd "governs" his flock.

1-6. To the Church in Sardis.

1. Inscription. Sardis. The spiritual condition in which each of these churches is found seems to have its analogy, if not its explanation, in the character of the community surrounding it, or the nature of those conditions under which its church life exists. The Church in Sardis is an example and

type of the worldly church, and Sardis itself appears to have been characterized in a way to afford, at least, the occasion for this. While the capital city of Crœsus, King of Lydia, whose name is the very synonym of extravagant wealth, and in whose possession Cyrus, his conqueror, in B. C. 548, is said to have found treasure to the enormous value of six hundred million dollars, this city enjoyed also peculiar commercial advantages. How much is fabulous and how much is true in what is related of the river Pactolus, on which the city stood, and its "golden sands," it may be impossible to say. Whether more or less of those sources of sudden and excessive wealth which in modern times have contributed so much to a mere sordid love of money-getting, may have been within reach of the people of Sardis, the city appears to have been noted, in ancient times, for its commercial activity, its wealth and splendor.



SARDIS.

It is at least suggestive that the church planted here is found blameable, not for the heresies which have been so sharply condemned in all save one of those before addressed, but for that dead spiritual state which is so often the result of mere worldliness, neglect of the spiritual, and engrossment with the material. — **He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.** In "the seven Spirits of God," we have, as in 1:4, anticipatory allusion to the symbolism in 4:5—"seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." We must reserve for its proper place more particular notice of this symbolism. Here it may suffice to say that the special force of its application is as indicating that which this same writer, in his Gospel (3:34) declares of our Lord—that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"; implying, also, perhaps, something of that which we

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

2 Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have [1]found

1 Many ancient authorities read, *not found thy work.*

have in Heb. 9: 14, "Who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." It is also the general doctrine implied in John 15: 16. In all these passages the Spirit is represented as in a peculiar relation with the Son in his redeeming work. Ineffably distinguished, so that in some high sense they differ in their personality, they are so in essence *one*, as that our Lord's own fullness of spiritual endowment is represented as being "through the eternal Spirit." The number "seven" in the passage before us, denoting completeness, perfection, is equivalent in its significance to what is said, as quoted above, that to Jesus the Spirit is given "not by measure"—that is to say, his endowment, as one divine, is perfect and infinite. The connection suggests that the particular attribute and office of the Spirit here alluded to is that implied in John 16: 8–11, if the common version be correct. "When he is come, he will *reprove*," etc. Such is the purpose and effect of the spiritual scrutiny now applied to this worldly church in Sardis. That our Lord hath "the seven stars," follows upon the fact that he hath "the seven Spirits of God." The seven stars "are the angels of the seven churches" (1: 20), held in the Lord's right hand. With him is the dispensation of the Spirit, and subordinate to him, accountable to him, are all those who have under this dispensation the ministry of the word. That he hath thus the seven Spirits of God is a note of warning, especially for the Church in Sardis, and its pastor.

1-3. Admonition. **I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.** It is altogether fanciful to suppose, with Bengel and others, that allusion may be made here to the name borne by "the person who formed the centre of the presiding body at Sardis." Says Bengel: "There are in Greek, and in other languages also, many names which are derived from life, such as Zosimus, Vitalis, etc. Very likely the angel of this church had a fine name of this sort, and from it the Lord takes occasion to admonish him of the opposite nature of his condition." Hengstenberg thinks there is "some probability" in this view. We see no shadow of probability in it, nor any justification whatever for reading thus into the passage, what is plainly not there. By the mere fact of its formal existence as a church, and by the pretension it put forward, the Church in Sardis had a name to live. It claimed to be a living church, in the very fact of maintaining its visibility as such; and to those who could not look beyond the outward semblance, it seemed to be a living church, and so had "the name" of such a one. It is quite unnecessary to look for any other meaning in the words than this plain one, lying thus upon the surface. "And art dead," declares what is true of this church, living thus only in name and in appearance. Some exception is implied below, in ver. 2, 4, to the general fact; yet the sad truth was, that in this Church at Sardis, as a Christian body, the spiritual life had so much waned that even this strong expression is justified. This life is, as Grotius says, *secundum Christum vivere*, "to live according to Christ," having, manifesting, strong, and happy in, that life which is in him as the vine, and in his people as the branches.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain [*the remaining things*] **that are** [*were*] **ready to die.** The words "be watchful" (γίνου γρηγορῶν), mean more than this simply. They mean literally, "*become watchful*," or "*awake and watch*," and imply a call to this church to rouse out of its slumberous state, and give earnest heed to that which alone can save it from complete extinction. When we come to notice these "things which remain," we see that the words above, "art dead," as already observed, must be taken with some qualification. They must mean "dead" so far as concerned the manifestation of life, and to a perilous extent even the possession of life. Its condition was one of spiritual inertness, such as might consist with some remaining element of spiritual life, yet this itself in a dormant and feeble state. To reanimate this, "strengthen" it, is what the church is now enjoined to do. For even these things which remain "are

3 [a]Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and [b]repent. [c]If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

3 no works of thine perfected before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep *it*, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not

[a] 1 Tim. 6 : 20; 2 Tim. 1 : 13; ver. 11....[b] ver. 19....[c] Matt. 24 : 42, 43; 25 : 13; Mark 13 : 33; Luke 12 : 39, 40; 1 Thess. 5 : 2, 6; 2 Pet. 3 : 10; ch. 16 : 15

[*were*] ready to die." The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts [also Codex Bezæ and Codex Porphyrianus, *i. e*, ℵ, A, C, P.—A. H.] require, here, the past tense. Alluding to this, Düsterdieck says: "The imperfect ['*were ready, were about to die*'] can be only understood as spoken from the standpoint of him who communicates the message (*des Briefschreibers*); but it is also evident that as in the words 'I have found' (εὕρηκά) immediately following, the Lord, who indeed is speaking, glances back to the before-mentioned scrutiny of the church." This scrutiny is implied in the words which follow.—**I have not found thy works perfect before God.** In the words "before God," there may be antithetical allusion to what is said above of this church, "thou hast a name that thou livest." With men it had still a reputable standing; but not "before God." Also in "I have not found thy works perfect," the standard by which all these churches, and all churches are tried, is indicated. It is required of them that their works shall be "perfect" (πεπληρωμένα); not in the sense of absolute perfection, but as "fulfilled" according to divine requirement, and in the measure justly expected even of fallible human beings. The Greek word means, literally, "made full"; the conception is not, therefore, one of holiness or the opposite, but of deficiency in measure. This fullness of performance the Lord had "found" in each of the churches before named, at least in such measure as that he could commend their "faith," their "patience," their "love," and their "service." Here, however, in Sardis, he finds that these things are lacking, and hence the admonition. The force of the Greek word for "before" (ἐνώπιον), "*face to face with*," "*in the sight of*," "*in presence of*," should be noticed. It implies how in the very presence of God, under his very eye, all human life is led. The best manuscripts have "my" (μου), with "God" (θεοῦ). So that the passage correctly reads: "I have not found thy works perfect in the sight of my God." Alford says that the word "my" (μου), "binds on the judgment of him who speaks to that of God." He who speaks does so in his capacity as manifesting and representing that Godhead which he shares with the Father and with the Spirit.

3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard. What force shall be given to this particle, translated "how" (πῶς)? Is it equivalent to "what"? or "in what manner?" or, "by what means?" The Greek word itself will not allow the first of these. The two other renderings may, perhaps, be combined in the significance of the passage as a whole. The words seem to point these disciples at Sardis back to the beginning of their Christian life, bidding them consider *how* that life had been first received. It was a gift of God in response to earnestness of desire, believing prayer, and faithful doing on their own part. It is implied that in the same way must its life, now so sadly declined, be renewed. The call of God they had then "heard"—let them hear it now.—**And hold fast and repent.** In the Greek, the first of these imperatives is in the present tense, the second in the aorist. It is a subtle distinction of sense which may be noticed. The first word suggests the idea that the holding fast is something to be continued; the second word, "repent," in the aorist imperative, presents with emphasis the conception of *the fact*, that only, with no reference to the collateral idea of continuance. The injunction to "hold fast," to keep, implies that what was before "received" has not all been lost. Holding fast to this, and earnestly asking for accessions of the same gift, this church, even in its low spiritual state, may yet have a blessing. But it must realize its own sad decline, and of all that has been the cause of this, it must "repent."—**If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.** The injuction and the threatening are in manifest relation with each other. The coming as a thief in the night is more than once thus mentioned in the Gospels, as indicating the unexpectedness of the Lord's coming, when he comes to judge and punish. Hence the force of the word "watch"—

4 Thou hast [a] a few names even in Sardis which have not [b] defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me [c] in white: for they are worthy.
5 He that overcometh, [d] the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not [e] blot out his name out of the [f] book of life, but [g] I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

4 know what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white;
5 for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his

[a] Acts 1 : 15....[b] Jude 23....[c] ch. 4 : 4; 6 : 11; 7 : 9, 13....[d] ch. 19 : 8....[e] Ex. 32 : 32; Ps. 69 : 28....[f] Phil. 4 : 3; ch. 13 : 8; 17 : 8; 20 : 12; 21 : 27....[g] Matt. 10 : 32; Luke 12 : 8.

"wake and watch." Just as the thief comes unwatched for, and unprepared for by the slumbering household, so will judgment and punishment come upon this careless and worldly church.—**And thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.** This renews, with added emphasis, the warning already given. The "coming" cannot be the second coming; but that visitation, providential and punitive, in which the consequences here threatened shall be realized. In the Greek the words, "thou shalt not know," are made emphatic by the use of the double negative (οὐ μή). They may be translated, "thou *certainly* shalt not know."

4-6. Promise. **Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.** The corrected reading, according to Tischendorf, is, "*But* thou hast a few names in [omitting *even*] Sardis which have not defiled their garments." These "few names"—few individuals in the church—represent the "things which remain." They are the redeeming element in the church, provided they have encouragement and support. That they have "not defiled their garments"—not partaken of the prevalent spiritual decline and consequent defiling worldliness—is the characteristic of their better condition. The idea of *fewness* is, no doubt, to be strictly taken.—**And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.** The promise, "shall walk with me in white"—that is to say, in white robes, as is clearly suggested in the form of the Greek word for "white" (λευκοῖς) the word for "white" being plural—points back to that which is said of these faithful ones, that they have "not defiled their garments." The imagery is the familiar one of *character* viewed as a garment. They had preserved their Christian fidelity and consistency. The promise is that they shall have that best reward, pure and holy character, or nature in its completeness. We should notice the distinction implied in garments "not defiled," and in garments made "white." The former means freedom from deforming and disgraceful stain; the latter means freedom from every kind of imperfection; such being the idea set forth in the pure and perfect "white" in which the redeemed are clothed. The words "they shall walk with me," foreshadow that perfect union with himself into which the Lord will finally bring his redeemed, and their free and happy intercourse with him, in their saved state, as when friends "walk" together in perfect mutual communion. We naturally connect the words of promise in this place, with what appears in 7: 13, 14. "For they are worthy," is not to be taken as implying *merit*, or as if what is promised rests for its condition and assurance upon any consideration of merit in themselves. They simply mean that they of whom this promise is spoken are *such as they for whom it is intended.* All the gifts of salvation are through the unmerited grace of God in Christ; but they are given, not to the unbelieving, the unfaithful, and the defiled, but to the believing, the faithful, and the pure.

5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. A reiteration of the promise in more express terms. Tischendorf reads "thus" (οὕτως), in place of "the same" (οὗτος); so that the passage as amended will stand, "he that overcometh thus," etc.—**And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.** Düsterdieck says: "The figure of the Book of Life is not taken from the genealogical tables of the priests; but from similar lists, such as those which the magistrates kept, and from which the names of deceased citizens were stricken out." Züllig's comment on the passage is: "According to Exod. 32: 32, 33; Ps. 69: 28; Isa. 4: 3, God has a book, in which the names of all those to whom he has purposed to give (corporeal, natural) life are beforehand enrolled. The name of him who dies is stricken out of this. This is 'the book of life,' or of 'the living,' the common mass of

6 [a]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith [b]he that is holy, [c]he that is true, he that hath [d]the key of David, [d]he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and [f]shutteth, and no man openeth;

6 angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.
7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;
These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth:

a ch. 2: 7....b Acts 3: 14....c 1 John 5: 20; ver. 14, ch. 1: 5; 6: 10; 19: 11....d Isa. 22: 22; Luke 1: 32; ch. 1: 18....e Matt. 16: 19....f Job 12: 14.

those living on the earth and subject to the dominion of the world-ruler. Something quite different is Dan. 12: 1, where it is a book in which are enrolled the names of those who, in that last (Messianic) trial of affliction come out of it with life, and, according to ver. 2, shall have now a better, an everlasting life. In this last form the Apocalypse here takes up the thought, and modifies it still further in this, that it is for it a book in which even before the world was made, the names of all future true confessors of Messiah Jesus were written, as the names of those whose life should have a part in his kingdom and in the ultimate Paradise, for which reason it is now called the Lamb's Book of Life." The imagery is evidently founded upon the general conception of an enrollment, for whatever purpose. There may be in it, thus, a general reference to the genealogical tables of the priests; but it would be altogether too restricted a view to regard it as limited to these, and thus as having in view that priesthood which is affirmed of all the redeemed. The view taken is evidently much broader, and regards the redeemed as the *elect*, or as the *enrolled* ones. But can these names once written be "blotted out"; the elect become non-elect? In truth, what our Lord here says is, virtually, that they *cannot be* blotted out. The overcoming of those faithful unto death is proof that their names are written in the Book of Life. The promise, "I will not blot out," is but declaring that to his own part of the "everlasting covenant," the Lord himself will be faithful. This he confirms in the following words: **I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.** This looks forward to the great day, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory." The call to attention, "He that hath an ear," etc., comes, as in the case next before, at the close, not at the beginning of the promise. It solemnly enforces and emphasizes all that has previously been said.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

In his notes upon ver. 5, Alford says: "Those who have a name that they *live*, and are dead, are necessarily wiped out of the Book of *Life;* only he whose name is a living name, can remain on those pages." Ought we not to say, rather, that only he whose name is a living name, was ever written there? Can we suppose such a thing as that in the Book of *Life* those have been enrolled who have only *a name* to live? Again he says: "Thus they whose names have been once inscribed in this book, whether by their outward admission into Christ's church by baptism, or by their becoming living members of him by faith, if they endure to the end as his soldiers and servants, and obtain the victory, shall not, as all his [*merely*] professed members shall, have their names erased from it." Such a view of the passage seems to us both confusing and misleading. We cannot suppose such a thing as that a false profession of living faith in the Saviour secures the enrollment of one's name in the Book of Life. Is God, who searches hearts, misled as easily by false professions, as men to whom the heart is a sealed book? It seems to us that the words under consideration—"I will not blot out," etc.—are, as intimated above, simply an assurance to the faithful ones of the absolute and perfect *trust* with which they may leave their final salvation in the hands of him whose promise and pledge they have. They are an encouragement to faith, at the same time that they are a stimulus to fidelity.

7-13. TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

7. INSCRIPTION. **To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write.** The historian Gibbon, while in a foot-note he indulges his customary spite against whatever savors of Christian truth, still in the text of his narrative (iv: 260 Milman, Ed. Harper,

1844), in connection with his account of the conquest of all these seven cities by the Turks, in 1312–1392, says in a spirit of something like historical justice: "In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick, of the Revelation; the desolation is complete, and the Temple of Diana or the Church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveler. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamos, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or by courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in the scene of ruins—a pleasing example that the paths of honor and safety may sometimes be the same." The Philadelphia of to-day is a city of some ten thousand inhabitants, mostly Turks, "situated," says Schaff, "upon four or five flat summits at the foot of the Mount Tmolus." Among its conspicuous features is a solitary pillar, standing as if intended to illustrate the promise written in ver. 12 of this chapter, and a building now used as a mosque, but which tradition declares to have been the place of worship used by the Church of Philadelphia, as it was when addressed in the message now before us. Philadelphia was less favorably situated than any of the other seven cities here mentioned. The region where it stands being volcanic, the city has been several times destroyed by earthquakes. In spite of these calamities it has survived, and, as narrated above, even when assailed by the invincible Ottomans, maintained a struggle for independence such as is recorded of no one of the far stronger neighboring cities. Strikingly analogous with this is what appears in this message of the Lord to the Church in Philadelphia; smallest and weakest of the seven, beset and persecuted by "them of the synagogue of Satan" (ver. 9), it



PHILADELPHIA.

still had so maintained its integrity, that not one word of reproof appears in all that is here written.—**These things saith he that is holy, he that is true.** "The Holy One" (ὁ ἅγιος). "The True One" (ὁ ἀληθινός). Each of the terms used indicates that which belongs to the essential nature of the being described. The Holy One, therefore, means more than simply the Righteous One, and the True One more than simply one who utters truth, whether in promise, in testimony, or in threatening. Both terms alike affirm that which is really true of only one being, that is, God, in whom alone holiness and truth are essential. They also, quite plainly, look forward, in their significance, and lend emphasis to that assertion of sovereignty over the house of David which follows.—**He that hath the key of David.** Interpreters are agreed in viewing this as a reference to the passage in Isaiah 22: 22, where it is said of Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut, and none shall open." Eliakim, it is predicted in this place, shall be placed "over the house"—or *the household*—be made Hezekiah's prime minister, in the room of the unworthy Shebna. The key of the house of David is thus laid "upon his shoulder," in the sense that he is put in charge with those things which more immediately concern the regulations of the palace, and as well the king's relations with his people. Through this minister access will be had to the king—he is more or less in the position of a *mediator;* the person through whom important affairs in the relations of ruler and ruled will be transacted. In this official position he exercises large powers; he can open and shut doors of access to royal clemency or justice, and doors of royal favor, deserved or undeserved. In our present passage, therefore, the allusion is, clearly, to our Lord's position and office as the dispenser of blessings, and all kingly gifts. It should be noticed that in this place it is not "the key of *the house* of David" that is spoken of, but "the key *of David*"; so that the office and function here asserted of himself by our Lord is not ministerial, as acting for another, but royal, as acting by an authority quite his own.—**He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.** The more exact reading is: "*and that openeth and no man shall shut, and shutteth and no man shall open.*" The imagery, of course, is suggested by that of the key. What it indicates is that the authority which our Lord exercises as King is absolute and final. This sovereignty he uses, even in delegating to his church some representative exercise of a like prerogative. "*I* will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16: 19). A certain authority, in teaching and discipline—a certain high privilege as dispensers of the offer of salvation through faith in his name—was delegated by our Lord to his apostles, and through them to his whole church—to both as representing him, alike in teaching and in ruling. He is always, however, the Head of the Church, the King in Zion, David's son and heir, and who "hath the key of David."

[It has been suggested that possibly this symbolism of "the key," in both passages above noticed, may be explained in another way; or rather, an auxiliary meaning be associated with this. In the article upon the "Scribes" in Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, the following passage occurs. The writer is speaking of the young scribe when finally admitted to full privilege as such: "After a sufficient period of training, probably at the age of thirty, the probationer was solemnly admitted to his office. The presiding rabbi pronounced the formula, 'I admit thee, and thou art admitted to the Chair of the Scribe,' solemnly ordained him by the imposition of hands, and gave to him, as the symbol of his work, tablets on which he was to note down the sayings of the wise, and the key of knowledge (comp. Luke 11: 52), with which he was to open or to shut the treasures of divine wisdom." The writer of the article referred to, Dr. Plumptre, in his commentary upon Matt. 16: 19, alludes to the custom mentioned, and regards it as suggesting a "train of figurative thought" blending with that afforded us by the passage in Isa. 22: 22: "When they [the scribes] were admitted to their office they received, as its symbol, the key of knowledge (Luke 11: 52), which was to admit them to the treasure-chambers of the 'house of the interpreter,' the *Beth-Midrash*

8 [a]I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee [b]an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
9 Behold, I will make [c]them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, [d]I will make them to come and worship [e]before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

8 I know thy works (behold, I have [1]set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not
9 deny my name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have

a ver. 1....b 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12....c ch. 2:9....d Isa. 49:23; 60:14.——1 Gr. *given*.

of the Rabbis. For this work the Christ had been training his disciples, and Peter's confession had shown that the training had so far done its work. He was qualified to be a 'scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,' and to 'bring forth out of its treasures things new and old,' and now the 'key' was given to him as the token of his admission to that office." If this interpretation should be adopted for the passage in Matthew, it would effectually dispose of the papistical assumption founded upon the words there. It is a less obvious one for the passage we have here under examination, though suggestive, also, for this. "The key of David"—since David was a ruler, not a teacher, or interpreter of the law—implies, clearly, a different function from that of the scribe; and must be meant here to affirm of our Lord the regal character which belongs to him as David's Son and Zion's King.]

8–13. Commendation and Promise. **I know thy works.** Not here spoken, as in other cases, by way of admonition, but rather of encouragement; implying that however feeble and small the Church at Philadelphia might seem, in point of numbers, whatever concerned its welfare was of importance to the Lord just the same, all the facts of its condition as well known, as if in the eye of man it had been itself of greater importance.—**Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.** "Open way of access to the knowledge of the Scriptures," is the sense given by one interpreter (Lyra); "an entrance into the joy of thy Lord, and so to uninterrupted progress in all good" (Bengel). Others take the words as referring in general to Christian privilege of access and spiritual intercourse with the Lord himself. The metaphor of "the key," as now explained, seems to make some such sense as this last necessary. But such privilege of access implies more than what might concern these Philadelphian Christians, as individuals. The assurance is given with special reference to those circumstances in their condition alluded to below, and to their need of special grace. There may be a union of the two ideas—the door of *access* and the door of *opportunity*.—**For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.** The force of the connecting particle "for," "because," should be noticed. It is a word of *appreciation*, and shows that if he who sees not as man seeth is prompt to mark and condemn the fault, he is no less prompt to recognize and approve that which is worthy. The connection of thought requires that in the phrase, "a little strength," the emphasis should be placed upon the word *strength*, not upon the word *little*. It is not because the strength is small, but because it is genuine. We have thus a thought in keeping with that which follows—"hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." The reality and genuineness of Christian *strength* are witnessed by Christian *fidelity*. It is thus that the prophet comforts himself (Isa. 49:4): "Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; *yet surely my judgment is with the Lord*, and my work with my God." (See General Comments, below.)

9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan. The meaning is, "them (who are) of the synagogue of Satan"; the clause is descriptive.—**Which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.** They are called a synagogue of Satan, in allusion to the fact that, as Jews, the synagogue organically characterizes them. Such as these here described have before been found at Smyrna, (2:9), where, as also here, they appear to be pointed out as conspicuous for their malice and bitterness. That they are declared to be of the synagogue of *Satan* (the "accuser," the "adversary"), may refer to this spirit of malicious opposition, taking the form, not so much of actual violence—for, as themselves being under restraint in pagan communities, they would in this

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, [a] I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon [b] all the world, to try them that dwell [c] upon the earth.

10 loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of my [1]patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of [2]trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole [3]world, to

a 2 Pet. 2: 9....*b* Luke 2: 1....*c* Isa. 24: 17.—1 Or, *stedfastness*....2 Or, *temptation*....3 Gr. *inhabited earth*.

be held back—as of false accusation, malicious slander. In all cases, however, where violence was used by the pagan authorities or the pagan populace, such Jews were present, to encourage and enjoy the cruelties practiced. In calling themselves "Jews," in any such sense as being the Lord's favored people, they spoke falsely. For, in the first place, that distinction had ceased, so far as nationality was concerned; and, in the next place, they were themselves lacking in all that was characteristic of the *true*, spiritual Israel.—**Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet.** The sentence preceding is not finished, but breaks off before the end is reached, and a new form of expression is adopted. Literally, it reads thus: "Behold, I will make (*give*, δώσω) them which are of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie—behold, I will *make* (ποιήσω) them that they shall come and shall worship before thy feet." A corresponding passage is at Isa. 60: 14: "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." An example is afforded in connection with our passage, of Romanist misinterpretation. "Behold, I will make them come and worship before thee," etc., is thus explained by Cornelius à Lapide: "This signifies that highest devotion of the faithful, reverence and submission as regards the church *and its prelates*. For this adoration proceeds from an apprehension of *prelatical excellence, more than human, though less than divine.*" *Significatur summa fidelium devotio, reverentia et submissio erga Ecclesiam ejusque Prælatos. Hæc enim adoratio procedit ex apprehensione excellentiæ Prælatorum, plus quam humanæ et minus quam divinæ.* It is, of course, not of the devotion of faithful ones (*fidelium devotio*) that the Lord is here speaking, but of the hostility of hypocritical pretenders—"which say they are *Jews*, and are not, but do lie"; while to attribute to the humble Philadelphian pastor, either prelatical functions or prelatical pretensions, is as much in the face of history, as it would be to represent the Apostle Peter as reigning at Rome in the pontificial splendor of his so-called successors. The passage can have no other consistent meaning than as promising to the few but faithful Christians at Philadelphia that the opposition which encounters them shall not prevail, but shall be effectually overcome and *humbled*. The expression, "worship before thee," must be taken in its Oriental sense—the act of prostration, implying not adoration, but respect.—**And to know that I have loved thee.** Some manuscripts read, "and *thou shalt know* that I have loved thee." The best authorities, however, seem to prefer that which is given above. The Lord's favor to these faithful ones is no doubt a testimony to themselves; but is mentioned here as carrying demonstration and conviction to even their enemies.

10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience. Great stress is laid, in many parts of our Lord's teaching, as also that of his apostles, upon "patience"—not the patience of mere submission, but that of active endurance—"patient continuance in well-doing" (Rom. 2: 7). We may cite Luke 8: 15; 21: 19; Matt. 10: 22; 24: 13; also, "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," in the early part of the book we are now studying (1: 9). "The word of my patience" must allude to such passages as these cited, and mean that injunction to "patience," steadfastness, and encouragement for it, of which these passages are examples.—**I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.** "Hour of trial," this must mean; trial, that is, of a nature to put fidelity to the proof, and in general disclose character. In explaining this phrase, "hour of trial," it does not seem right to pass over all that was present and local, or soon to become so, to this Philadelphian Church and pastor, and those events, alike in the near and the distant future, which the words, "hour of temptation," of trial,

11 Behold, [a]I come quickly: [b]hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take [c]thy crown.

11 [1]try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy

a Phil. 4:5; ch. 1:3, 22:7, 12, 20....b ver. 3; ch. 2:25....c ch. 2:10.—Or, *tempt.*

would so appropriately describe, and limit the idea, as Alford does, to "the great time of trouble which shall be before the Lord's second coming." The promise is plainly meant for present strengthening and comfort, and so far from mere vague allusion to an indefinite, and in point of fact far-distant, future, must have reference to things more or less immediate and pressing. What should hinder our understanding by the words under consideration the very times of trial of which it is the purpose of this whole book, very largely, to speak, and the introduction to which was now already near at hand—that whole scene of Christian trial, of testing vicissitude, including along with bitter persecution the falling away of many, and the incoming of pernicious heresies; in all which Christian fidelity and the very spirit of the world itself should be put to the proof? In its broadest meaning, however, the "hour of temptation" may be viewed as embracing the whole of the present Dispensation, to which our own, with every other period, from the first to the second advent, belongs. "I also will keep thee *from*." What is the force of the preposition? It cannot mean that faithful Christians have a promise that they shall be spared all participation in the testing trials; for no promise of this kind has ever been given, nor has such ever been the experience of the Lord's people. "I pray not," said Jesus, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." To denote a keeping "away from," a different preposition (ἀπὸ) would be used. The one here employed (ἐκ), meaning "out of," implies more a safe *carrying through* the "temptation" indicated, and final deliverance from it. The literal rendering would be, "taking thee out from the hour of temptation, which is about to come over all the habitable earth to try those who dwell upon the earth, I will keep thee." The word rendered "keep" means, in its full force, "keep securely." It is like what our Saviour asks for himself in John 12:27: "Father, save me from [ἐκ—out of] this hour." The promise, therefore, is that these to whom it is spoken shall be kept *in* the temptation, and in the Lord's good time delivered *from* it.—**Which shall come upon all the world.** In effect, "the world" was the Roman Empire. What was known of the world was nearly all included within those limits, so that the expression we find often used with this meaning. That scene of persecution in which for Christians of the earlier ages the "temptation" so much consisted, had as we know this extent.—**To try them that dwell upon the earth.** "A sign which shall be spoken against . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Such the "Child" was to be, and such he has ever been. The trial (πειρασμοῦ) is not alone for Christians. The world, in these events, is put to the proof no less, while in the vicissitudes and consequences of the long spiritual conflict, "them that dwell upon the earth" share.

11. Behold, I come quickly. "The word, I come quickly," says Hengstenberg, "is applicable to all times. Where sin is, and hostility toward the church of the Lord, there also the Lord is near." He thinks that the coming spoken of should be understood in close connection with ver. 10; it is a coming to bring upon the world the times of trial there implied. To interpret this expression "I come quickly," wherever it occurs, as meaning the Lord's second coming, is to force, quite unallowably, the inspired word into the narrow limitations of a preconception. In what sense the words are to be taken, will be best determined in each case by the connection. Here they must point to a coming of the Lord in those providential and judicial dispensations which were to attend the events foreshadowed in the warning already given. The text followed by the revisers omits the Greek for "behold."—**Hold that fast which thou hast.** The expression "that which thou hast" (ὃ ἔχεις)—as in 2:6: "this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes"—implies throughout these messages some spiritual gift, grace, or sign of spiritual progress, already in possession. Two things are suggested by the form of the expression here: *first*, that this which these Christians have is something greatly to be desired; and *secondly*, that there are those who would snatch it away from them. Let

12 Him that overcometh will I make [a] a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and [b] I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* [c] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: [d] and *I will write upon him* my new name.
13 [e] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

12 crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the [1] temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from
13 my God, and mine own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

[a] 1 Kings 7: 21; Gal. 2: 9....[b] ch. 2: 17; 14: 1; 22: 4....[c] Gal. 4: 26; Heb. 12: 22; ch. 21: 2, 10....[d] ch. 22: 4....[e] ch. 2: 7.—[1] Or, *sanctuary:* and so throughout this book.

them guard it well.—**That no man take thy crown.** That which they have in present possession is not the "crown"; the crown is, rather, that which they are to gain by holding fast this which they already have. Those who would "take" their crown are not competitors for it; but such as would prevent their attainment of it by enticing them to unfaithfulness.

12. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. The symbolism implied in the "pillar" is indicated in the words which follow, **and he shall go no more out**—with the emphatic form of the negative particle used (οὐ μή), "he shall certainly"—assuredly—"never go out." The leading idea is that of the firmness, the fixedness, of the pillar in its place, so that often it stands when other parts of the building have fallen. Interpreters are divided, as to whether by "temple" shall be understood the church militant or the church triumphant. It is doubtful if it be wise to use the term "church" in this connection at all. Let it be noticed that the symbol is of a pillar in *the temple.* Did the temple prefigure the church, in either of the senses just mentioned? We conceive that it prefigured, rather, that New, Spiritual, Dispensation of which the church is simply one feature. When this Dispensation reaches its final consummation in the completed redemption of all the "called" and the "glorified," the temple-types all attain their ultimate and perfect fulfillment. In the anticipatory sense, as we may say, they do so in that condition of blessedness into which saved souls are received as they enter heaven. We do not see, therefore, that the promise in question implies aught else but the *security* of the true believer, in his place amongst those whom the Lord calls, and especially in his final saved state. (See General Comments).—**And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem.** The divine name to denote that he belongs to God, the name of the city of God to denote his citizenship there. The coming down of this city out of heaven, points forward to what is said later in the book. It is that consummation of the divine purpose of grace, in which the distinction of *earthly* state and *heavenly* state ceases, the redemption being complete.—**And my new name.** The words, in our version, 'I will write upon him," are supplied, the sense plainly requiring that they shall at least be understood in reading. The Redeemer's "new name" is that which he acquires in becoming the Redeemer. The redeemed bear it to show that they belong to him.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

In the words, "for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name," it is perhaps proper to see something antithetical intended. For the strong—those who have *much* "strength"—to keep the Lord's word and confess his name, is less to be remarked, perhaps, than when this fidelity is found in them that have "*little* strength." This we should say, at all events, where the strength spoken of refers to those elements of power—numbers, social predominance, etc.—which might enable a community of Christians to cope on more equal terms with hostility and opposition. There may, however, be something delusive in the appearance of strength seen in such a community. In the case of these Seven Churches in Asia, the relatively strong are the weak ones, while the weak are the strong. Even Ephesus had left its first love; even Pergamos and Thyatira had yielded too much to the pernicious false teachers; Sardis had become worldly, and Laodicea, though "rich and increased with goods," was "poor, and blind, and naked"; Philadelphia, its mountain home often shaken by the earthquake, assailed within by bitter enemies, few and

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; a These things saith the Amen, b the faithful and true witness, c the beginning of the creation of God;

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true

a Isa. 65: 16....b ch. 1: 5; 19: 11; 22: 6; ver. 7....c Col. 1: 15.

small in itself, nevertheless had that word of supreme applause: Thou "hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." What strength it had, whether in numbers or in graces, was real strength. It is the *genuine* in this world, that wins victories.

Something of this may also be implied in the symbolism of the pillar. Only the best material is selected for this part of the building; and because of its genuine solidity it *endures*. Because of their own possession of this quality the Philadelphian Christians had "kept the word" of their Lord's "patience"; had been steadfast and enduring. They had thus far stood, each as a pillar in his place. They shall continue thus to stand in "the hour of temptation" that approaches, and in the final redemption they shall be pillars again in the glorious temple where all types are fulfilled, and they that have sought "for glory, and honor and immortality" receive "eternal life." To be, in reality, what we are named, should be deemed by us, as respects personal attainments, the indispensable thing.

In the description of the holy city, New Jerusalem, given later in this book (21: 22), we read: "And I saw no temple therein." What we have in our present passage, if taken as proposed, might be thought inconsistent with this; since we read, in the connection, of the temple and the city in a way to imply that in the one the other is found. The passage in 21: 22, taken as a whole, furnishes the explanation. "I saw no temple therein, *for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*" That is, the temple and the city are one, and it is the presence of God and the Lamb that constitutes both. We are not, therefore, to press the symbolism in either case in a literal way, but understand that under the image of sensible things, spiritual things are set forth. The final state of the redeemed shall be *as if* a walled city had been built for their eternal habitation, and their citizenship there shall be assured, as if upon the forehead of each the name of the city, in token thereof, were written. It shall be *as if* all the saved had, in the process of redeeming and glorifying grace, "grown into an holy temple in the Lord," wherein should be realized the whole purpose of infinite love, the types of the old temple all fulfilled, and the faithful ones all standing there, fixed and shining, forever. To forget that this is imagery, in every part of it, is to mistake in a strange way the divine thought in it all. Let it be observed that while we view the promise as addressed to the whole church, it is individualized by what is said in the connection—"to him that overcometh." It is, *therefore*, a promise especially to each individual Christian. The Redeemer's "new name" points us to that mission and mercy of his in which he places himself in such a "new" relation with a sinful world. The "name" represents alike the person and the office. As Redeemer, he came in a new manifestation, and in an undertaking unexampled in the history of the universe. His name of "Emmanuel," God with us; of "Jesus," because he shall save his people from their sins; of the "Lamb," slain from the foundation of the world; of "Shepherd," leading and feeding, and saving his flock; of "Redeemer," as comprehending all—THESE and THIS are his "new name." To bear that name, written upon us by his own hand, is to be ourselves redeemed.

14-22. TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA.

14. INSCRIPTION.—**The angel of the church of the Laodiceans.** There is no good reason for the change in form made here in the Common Version. A correct translation makes the clause read as in the instances above, "the angel of the church in Laodicea."—**These things saith the Amen.** It seems fitting to connect these words, with the title which our Lord claims for himself, with Isa. 65: 16: "That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in *the God of truth*"—(Elohē "Amen")—"the God of *Amen*," "the God of faithfulness." It is the very highest expression of divinity. "He that blesseth himself in

the earth," says Jehovah by his prophet, shall bless himself in the God thus revealed in the attribute most truly divine, if such a thing could be, "and he that sweareth in the earth"—he who pledges his own truth in the most solemn way—"shall swear" by him who is the very essence of truth, and who will not endure untruth or deceit. When, therefore, our Lord entitles himself "the Amen," it is a title in effect identical with this in Isaiah, "the God of Amen"—the Divine and Faithful One. Züllig thinks that this title, "The Amen," is used here, because this is the last of the messages to the churches; and that it looks back upon all which have gone before, as being the solemn "amen" to them all. This seems, as Alford terms it, "fanciful." The clause which follows, **The faithful and true witness,** is in some measure appositional. It is the second time, already, in this book, that our Lord is styled "the Witness," and "the *faithful* Witness." This office of his seems thus to be emphasized. We are reminded of his own declaration in another place: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words [word of testimony, word of promise, word of threatening] shall not pass away." The Greek words in our passage, for "faithful and true (πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός)," are those which express *essential* faithfulness and truth in the strongest manner.—**The beginning of the creation of God.** The Sinaitic manuscript reads, "the Amen *and* the faithful and true witness, and the beginning of *the church* of God." Some commentators, as Grotius, Wetstein, and others, before the discovery of this manuscript, had already taken "creation (κτίσεως)" as equivalent to "church (ἐκκλησίας)," meaning by this that new creation, the church, in its large spiritual sense. If the new reading in the manuscript alluded to may be accepted, this will be plainly the meaning of the passage. In either case, the force of the word "beginning (ἀρχὴ)" is much the same. It means beginning in the active, not the passive sense. It means "origin," "cause," with the implication also of "headship." We should probably read "creation," and not "church," making the sense of the passage as a whole, correspond with that in John 1: 3: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made," and in Heb. 1: 2: "By whom also he made the worlds." The Greek word (ἀρχὴ),



LAODICEA.—ASIA MINOR.

15 [a]I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.
17 Because thou sayest, [b]I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

15 witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would
16 thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my
17 mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and

a ver. 1....b Hos. 12: 8; 1 Cor. 4: 8.

however, expresses along with the idea of originating cause, that of ruler and prince. The whole passage, therefore, asserts for our Lord that supreme place which is so often in the New Testament declared to be his. (Comp. the entire first chapter of Hebrews, and also Rev. 17: 14).

15-19. Admonition. **I know thy works.** In this case the admonitory words have a warning emphasis. As Alford paraphrases: "I have thy whole course of life before me, and its testimony is:" **that thou art neither cold nor hot.** The spiritual condition of these Laodicean Christians is characterized differently from that of either of the before-named churches. In some respects it resembles that of the Church in Ephesus; yet we find no such testimony here as is given there, to the patience and fidelity once characterizing the church, and still in some measure found in it. The whole Laodicean body is spoken of as fallen into that "lukewarm" (ver. 16) state, which is neither real life nor actual death.—**I would thou wert cold or hot.** Nowhere, perhaps, is the unworthiness and the peril of a merely negative Christianity more forcibly indicated than in the fact that our Lord has here spoken these words. The Laodicean condition is not, indeed, one of perfect deadness to all spiritual things; there is a feeble life, a doubtful warmth, and so far the condition may be a hopeful one. But while this comes far short of what ought to be found in souls redeemed by the blood of Christ and honored with the call to serve him, it is full of danger, because resting in these feeble indications of spiritual life, the lukewarm Christian may live and die *only* "not far from the kingdom of God." I would thou wert either the one or the other—says he who searches the heart.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. It should be observed here, that the word in the Greek above, "heat" (ζεστὸς), properly means heat in its action upon *fluids*. So "lukewarm" (χλιαρὸς), means a lukewarm fluid, like water. The figure employed is, therefore, carried out consistently. The effect of warm water in producing nausea is well known. No reader can fail to mark the expressive force with which the Lord's displeasure with the *negative* sort of Christian condition here described is expressed. Perhaps the word disgust is not too strong a word to use. It may be well to notice at this point a singular reading in the Sinaitic manuscript. As found there, the verse is: "Because thou art thus lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot; *refrain thy mouth* (παῦσαι τοῦ στόματός σου)," or "cease from thy mouth." How such a manifest error of reading can have crept in, it might be hard to explain. Tischendorf, very properly as all must feel, rejects it, and retains that of the received text: "I will spew thee out of my mouth (μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου)." I am on the point of doing so. It will be seen that the words do not express a final purpose; but imply that there is still a day of grace for the Laodicean Church.

17. Because thou sayest. It is ever true that none are so well satisfied with their spiritual state as half-and-half Christians. The truly spiritual are spiritually *sensitive;* they are alive to their own deficiencies, and earnestly seek for the "more grace." The spiritually inert are wont to be self-satisfied; the name suffices them for the reality, and they willingly mistake a superficial *religiousness* for piety. The "because" connects the beginning of this verse with that of the following one: "Because . . . . I counsel thee."—**Rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.** Alford says, very truly, that "from the whole context it is evident that not outward worldly wealth, but imagined spiritual riches, are in question"; this "imagined spiritual self-sufficingness" being "the natural growth of an outwardly prosperous condition." From the same writer's "Prolegomena" we quote the following. Of Lao-

18 I counsel thee [a] to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and [b] white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

18 poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou

[a] Isa. 55:1; Matt. 13:44; 25:9....[b] 2 Cor. 5:3; ch. 7:13; 16:15; 19:8.

dicea he says: "It suffered much in the Mithridatic War, but recovered itself, and became a wealthy and important place, at the end of the republic and under the first emperors. It was completely destroyed by the great earthquake, in the reign of Nero, but was rebuilt by the wealth of its own citizens, without help from the State. Its state of prosperity and carelessness described in the epistle is well illustrated by these facts. . . . . It produced literary men of great eminence, and had a great medical school."—**And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.** The contrast between the *imagined* state of the Laodicean Church and its real one is made exceedingly striking, and is expressed in words strikingly bold and unsparing. In so far as outward things were concerned, it was, in fact, rich, increased in goods, having need of nothing. Because of this prosperous outward state it had, all too hastily, assumed in itself a like spiritual condition. The Lord's words show what utter spiritual poverty may be covered by worldly shows and splendors.

18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. The word "buy," here, is not a good translation; or, if allowed to stand, for the sake of its emphatic force, must not be too literally pressed. The Septuagint uses the same word (ἀγοράζω) at that place in Isa. 55:1: "Come, buy wine and milk *without money, and without price.*" It is clear that as so used the word cannot mean buying by paying an equivalent for that which is bought. It is the more important to note this distinction, as papistical writers use the passage here in our chapter in support of their own pernicious doctrine as to the efficacy of good works. Thus Lyra: "*emere operibus bonis,*" "to buy with good works"; and to a similar effect various others, whom Alford quotes. Stuart translates: "I counsel thee to procure of me gold tried by fire"; claiming that the Greek word does not always have the specific meaning of *buying* a thing by paying a price for it. It may be better, however, to retain the word "buy" in the translation, provided the figurative force of it be recognized in the exposition. What men buy they are understood to place a value upon and strongly desire. Besides, even that which comes to men in the gift of Christ, is in one sense conditioned, and comes only to those in whom the conditions are met. It is, however, none the less *a gift*, and is by no means to be viewed as if purchased by the payment for it of an equivalent value. Something of this is implied by our Lord, here, in representing the gift which these Christians are exhorted to secure as "gold," which in common usage is rather that by which the purchase is made, than the object purchased; and when he adds, "that thou mayest become rich," it is made clear that what he is recommending is that essential wealth which is rather the *basis* than the object of barter. He would have them procure of him the absolute spiritual riches, given to those who seek, with a view to use for the glory of him who gives, and to be sought with the earnest desire of him in the parable, who having found a pearl of great price, "went and sold all that he had and bought it." Notice, also, that it is "gold tried [purified] in the fire"; that which is precious as freed from alloy, pure and true.—**And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed** [that thou mayest cast them about thee]**, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.** The "gold" represents spiritual riches in general; the "white raiment," spiritual character. A contrast is implied of this true adornment with those outward ones in which the wealth of the Laodiceans enabled them readily to indulge. There is allusion, also, to the strong antithesis in ver. 17. Outwardly, in every worldly sense, they were amply arrayed and adorned. Inwardly, and in respect to that in which true adornment consists, they were "naked." The white raiment is offered, that the shame of this nakedness may be taken away.—So were they "blind," and hence this added counsel: **Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.** To all this they are "counseled"; implying, thus, how

19 [a]As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
20 Behold, [b]I stand at the door, and knock: [c]if any man hear my voice, and open the door, [d]I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
21 To him that overcometh [e]will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.
22 [f]He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

19 mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten:
20 be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup
21 with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in
22 his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

a Job 5:17; Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5, 6; James 1:12.....b Cant. 5:2....c Luke 12:37....d John 14:23....e Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; ch. 2:26, 27....f ch. 2:7.

freely they act who, even as drawn by the constraining Spirit, come to Christ for all good things.

19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. These are surely noticeable words, as following upon such an unsparing exposure of the faults of the Laodicean Church. They reveal the spirit in which even the sharpest utterances of divine reproof are made. The meaning is that rebuke and chastening may be signs of love, even where they indicate displeasure. The words "rebuke" and "chasten" themselves imply this. Literally, the word for "rebuke" means "bring to conviction," and that for "chasten" (παιδεύω), means "to discipline." To convict and so lead to repentance, and to discipline, are acts, not of judgment, but of mercy.—**Be zealous, therefore, and repent.** The exhortation, "be zealous," has reference to that fault of spiritual supineness, lukewarmness, which is the chief fault found in these now addressed. That they may come to repentance is the whole purpose of the severe disclosure of their fault that has been made. The whole address is like the vigorous treatment sometimes found necessary in rousing the sleeper.

20-22. Promise. **Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.** Says Stuart: "The imagery here employed is that of the Saviour as going around among the dwellings of the Laodicean Church, and paying a visit to each, and holding friendly intercourse with each." The preposition "at" (ἐπί) following "stand" is itself followed by the accusative case, and suggests the idea, "having come to the door, I am standing and knocking." By the knocking must be understood the means used, providential and other—including the message here sent—to gain the attention of this lukewarm church, and stir it to duty.—**If any man hear my voice.** This implies a call, in connection with the other form of summons,—**And open the door.** The entrance of the Lord is never a *forced* entrance. Whatever of difficulty there may be in mutually adjusting the human freedom and the divine constraint, so that neither shall invade the sphere of the other, it is certain that the opening of the door is the soul's own free act.—**I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.** Observe the *reciprocity* implied. He who comes thus as a guest, comes laden with all spiritual good things, and is both guest and host.

21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne. The participation begun in the mutual communion just described shall be continued, not only while this present state of trial and discipline lasts, but in that future state of glory and beatitude, when the overcoming of Christian conflict and victory shall at last reach its consummation. The "throne" must be treated, of course, as imagery, and simply points to that participation with him in the glory to which he ascended that is to be the portion of his redeemed ones.—**Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.** A most fitting close to this series of messages spoken by the glorious being standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks. The divine splendors of that vision of the Lord, so lately the Crucified One, now the Exalted and Reigning One, justify these words, "as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." That has come to pass of which in his humiliation he had spoken when he prayed: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). To a participation in this glory he invites us all.

22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all. Watch." (Mark 13:37).

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and [a] the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, [b] Come up hither, [c] and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

1 AFTER these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, *a voice* as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must

a ch. 1 : 10....b ch. 11 : 12....c ch. 1 : 19 ; 22 : 6.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

Christianity of the Laodicean type is that which, in an age like our own, finds peculiar occasion and opportunity. There is nothing to indicate that the Christians of Laodicea had any share in the persecutions experienced by neighboring churches. They do not seem to have been disturbed by heresies of a pernicious or immoral kind. They were prospered in all worldly circumstances. They represent to us an age in which persecution has become impossible; in which the false teacher, if he appears, bears for the most part a plausible exterior, so as seriously to offend neither formal piety nor outward morality; and in which Christianity has so far prevailed as that those who avow it are no longer "a sect everywhere spoken against." The peculiar danger of such a time is exactly this "lukewarmness," which wears so fair an outside, yet which to the Lord himself is so displeasing. "I would thou wert cold or hot," is what his word declares at such a time. A negative Christianity—one which comes easily into alliance with the world, which selects out of revealed truth only that which to the worldly mind is least offensive, and amongst the attributes of Christian character, only that which least characterizes "a peculiar people"—such a Christianity as this, ruinous to souls, dishonoring to the very name it bears, the Lord abhors. In our own time it finds only too ready acceptance, and is only too much a characteristic of the age itself.

In closing our study of these Epistles to the Seven Churches, we cannot but remark how large a body of precious truth is contained in them, and how representative these churches are of the many varieties of spiritual condition in which churches and Christians of all ages are wont to be found. There is for this reason all the more of emphasis in the words found in connection with each of these epistles, and with which the last of them is concluded: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

THE THEOPHANY.

1–3. THE VISION OF GOD.

1. After this. There is no reason to suppose any considerable interval of time between the ending of the vision described in Chapters II. and III., and the beginning of this which now opens. The phrase, "after these things (*μετὰ ταῦτα*)," or "afterwards," occurring so often in the book, does not necessarily imply any such intervals, but simply the successive stages of the revelation made.—**I looked, and, behold, a door was opened.** The word is simply, "I beheld," or "I saw" (*εἶδον*). We must not translate so as to imply that John saw the door in the act of opening. The exact and literal rendering would be, "I saw, and behold a door having been opened (*ἦνε γμένη*," or "a door which had been opened"—an opened door. —**In heaven.**—Stuart appears to take the Greek word, here, (*οὐρανός*), as equivalent to the Hebrew word "firmament (*rakiya*)," understanding, thus, by the door, an opening in the firmament above, as when at the baptism of Jesus (MATT. 3:16) "the heavens were opened unto him." This does not seem to be the meaning of the writer in our passage. It is a door opened "*in*," not "*into*," heaven. Some interpreters, again, seem to regard the word as used in that symbolical sense in which by "heaven" is supposed to be meant the church. Thus Gill: "The phrase is to be understood of a discovery of things that were, or were to be, in the Church of God, which in this book is often signified by *heaven*." Düsterdieck's comment is better, that the "heaven" is not to be here thought of as an arched vault [the firmament], nor a temple, but as the house or palace of God, in which he sits enthroned. Subsequent occurrences of the word, however, make it doubtful if even this expresses the whole idea. For example, in ch. 12, we read of the woman clothed with the sun, the great red dragon, and the war between Michael and the dragon, as all being "in heaven." We cannot suppose these to be

2 And immediately [a]I was in the Spirit: and, behold, [b]a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

2 [1]come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven,

[a] ch. 1: 10; 17: 3; 21: 10....[b] Isa. 6: 1; Jer. 17: 12; Ezek. 1: 26; 10: 1; Dan. 7: 9.——Or, *come to pass. After these things straightway, etc.*

seen "in the palace, or house of God." In the same connection we are told how the tail of the dragon sweeps to the earth "the third part of the stars of heaven." It would seem, therefore, that the word is used with a very broad, and a somewhat vague meaning. Perhaps we may best take it as implying, in general, the scene of the Apocalyptic wonders exhibited in this book. These are seen in vision, and in such a blending, if we may so say, of the highest heaven with the physical one, or the firmament, as that *both* are more or less implied. On this Apocalyptic scene a door is opened, revealing, in august pre-eminence, that grouping of transcendently glowing forms composing the Theophany now to be described.—**And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me.** The literal and accurate rendering, here, is very important to the sense. The whole passage should read: "I saw, and behold a door which had been opened in heaven, and the voice [the interjectional form is continued, as if it read, "and behold the voice," etc., the word "behold" (ἰδοὺ) being in fact repeated in the Sinaitic manuscript] the first one (ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη) which I had heard, as of a trumpet [comp. 1: 10] speaking with me." The meaning is, that he hears the same voice which at the opening of the preceding vision he had heard. The angelic attendance is continued here, and the same voice addresses him.—**Which said, Come up hither.** We are not, of course, to suppose any change of *bodily* presence. It is well known how independent, for a special purpose, the soul may for a time be made of its bodily habitation. Paul tells us, in a well-known passage (2 Cor. 12: 2-4), of "a man in Christ," himself no doubt, "caught up to the third heaven" and made to hear "unspeakable words." Other examples of a like kind are upon authentic record. It is an ecstatic, trance-like condition, in which the soul becomes independent of the body for all purposes of self-transmission, perceiving, hearing, and knowing.—**And I will show thee things which must be hereafter.** These words should be especially marked. They are a clue to the real purpose of all the visions which follow, and to the symbolism employed in relating them. This one now immediately before us, while it is a vision, a manifestation of God, a "theophany," does not have this for its sole, or even its chief aim, nor does it even attempt to make any adequate revelation to us of the divine and the heavenly glory. It simply presents to view, under a guise of resplendent imagery, so much of the attributes of the Divine Being, and so much of what is heavenly, as may further the end really in view—which is to show things that must be hereafter.

2. And immediately I was in the Spirit. "Immediately I *became* in the Spirit." The seer must have been "in the Spirit" when he saw the door open, and heard the voice of the angel, since these things would be plainly impossible to one in his normal state. There came now, however, as Alford explains, "a new accession of the Spirit's powerful influence."—**And, behold, a throne was set in heaven.** "A throne *lay* in heaven," would be the more exact translation. But the English word so used, would not convey an idea congruous and becoming, in our idiom. We never speak of a throne as "laid." "Was placed" would convey a wrong impression, as if the act of placing the throne occurred under the eye of the seer. We may render, "And lo, a throne had been set, or placed in heaven." What is to be understood is that, as John in the Spirit drew near and gazed upon the amazing vision before him, the object which first engaged his attention was "a throne."—**And one sat** [was sitting] **on the throne.** The Divine Being thus revealed is, in subsequent parts of the book, named as "God which sitteth upon the throne" (7: 10), "God that sat on the throne" (19: 4), "him that sitteth upon the throne" (5: 13), where a plain distinction is made between him who is thus seated, and "the Lamb," as also in 6: 16, "hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." It is God the Father who is meant. His enthrone-

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: [a]and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

3 and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat *was* to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, like an

[a] Ezek. 1: 28.

ment, in the vision, implies that supremacy in point of office, if we may so speak, everywhere in the New Testament assigned to him; the Second Person in the Trinity appearing throughout these visions in those offices which he assumed as the Redeemer of men, and "Prince of the kings of the earth"; and the Third Divine Person, under another symbolism, soon to be noticed, as the spiritual Enlightener and Purifier. It is to be observed that John does not *name* either the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, in this opening vision; his narrative of what he saw being strictly in accordance with the impression made upon him as he gazed. He tells us simply what he *did* see, without attempting, at all, to go back of the vision as it actually was, or to explain the striking figures that appeared in it, otherwise than as they presented themselves to him at the moment. There seems no good reason to suppose, with some commentators, that the Divine Occupant of the throne is not here more expressly indicated because of any Jewish reserve in uttering the name regarded by Jews as too sacred to be spoken. Such reserve would be out of keeping with the whole spirit of the New Testament. When Jesus taught men to say "Our Father," he set a seal of discredit upon all whatever which should make the divine name a name of dread, save to its enemies.

3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone. We are here reminded of what Ezekiel saw in the vision related in the beginning of his prophecy (1:4). Out of that "brightness" which symbolized the divine presence and glory, there was "as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire"—an amber-colored gleam. Again, in 8:2, there is described, "as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber." Daniel (7:9) describes "the Ancient of Days" in a garment white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." More nearly parallel with our present passage is that in Rev. 21:11, where, of the New Jerusalem, "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," it is said that "her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal." The jasper is described by ancient writers as of many colors: "purple, cerulean, green, etc," says Stuart, and sometimes of a crystal whiteness. It is the last that seems intended here—the pure white jasper, "crystal-like in clearness." The sardine-stone—sardius—was a red colored stone—"the blood-red sardius," one ancient writer calls it. The crystal jasper may be taken as symbolizing divine holiness; the blood-red sardius God's punitive righteousness. Some interpreters think we should conceive the description here, as if the crystal-like appearance is seen in one part, and the red in another—"the clear light of the jasper above, and the red gleam of the sardius below"; so Düsterdieck quotes Züllig and Hengstenberg, not, however, with approbation. Düsterdieck himself thinks we should view the jasper radiance and the sardius radiance as blending in a twofold gleam (*gedoppelte Glanz*)—"a profoundly significant token of the essential oneness of God's holiness and righteousness."—**And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.** Some commentators, as Bengel and Hengstenberg, think we should conceive this bow as encompassing the encircling thrones of the twenty-four elders, mentioned in the next verse. There is nothing in the description given to indicate this. What John sees is evidently like that which Ezekiel describes in his own vision (1:28): "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness, round about"; the surpassing and over-awing splendor of the divine manifestation being thus encircled with the reassuring token of covenant mercy. The bow may be viewed as having the appearance of a crown encircling the head of the throne, and of the august being seated there. Whether the word in the Greek text (ἶρις) should be translated "rainbow," strictly with the meaning commonly attached to that word, may be doubtful. But a single color is here mentioned—the emerald green. Some

4 [a]And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, [b]clothed in white raiment; [c]and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

4 emerald to look upon. And round about the throne *were* four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones *I saw* four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white

a ch. 11 : 16....b ch. 3 : 4, 5; 6 : 11; 7 : 9, 13, 14; 19 : 14....c ver. 10.

think that we may simply view this as the *predominating* color. It is safer to take the description as it reads. For the same reason, we decline the suggestion of other interpreters, that a blending of the three colors named may be intended—the jasper, the sardius, and the emerald. The meaning seems to be that the two former are seen united in the resplendence of the divine form filling the throne, while the encompassing bow bears simply the soft green of the emerald. "In agreement with the symbolical meaning of that twofold gleam," says Düsterdieck, alluding to the jasper and the sardius, "is the mild emerald, which indeed in itself is a token of the divine grace." He does not accept, however, Hengstenberg's view that the bow in the vision here is, as the latter supposes it to be, always "a sign of grace *returning after wrath.*" He prefers that of Grotius: "In his judgments God is ever mindful of his covenant." (*Deus in judiciis foederis semper suis meminit*). Stuart's remark upon this passage is as follows: "The rainbow (ἶρις), around the throne, is an exquisite conception. Such was the splendor of the throne, that the eye could not bear it. It is softened by this beautiful veil cast over the scene." This may, in general, be accepted; but must not be pressed so far as to confuse, with the radiance as a whole, the distinctive form of the bow.

4. The Four and Twenty Elders. **And round about the throne were four and twenty seats.** The word for "seats" is the same as for "throne" in verse 2. We should read accordingly, "four and twenty *thrones.*" The significance of this will appear farther on.—**And upon the seats** [*thrones*] **I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment.** The word "elders" (πρεσβυτέρους), is a title of dignity. The elders, here, are representative persons, their presence supplying to this group of striking and significant symbols an important element. In studying the import of this feature of the vision, we must bear in mind that what John now sees is introductory to revelations soon to be made to him of the "things which must be hereafter"; the future of the church of Jesus Christ, and of the world itself in its relation thereto. In him who sits upon the throne, the resplendent centre of this august assembly, he sees God, as holy, just, and yet gracious. In the entirety of the vision, as we shall find, representative forms appear, foreshadowing the forces that will enter into the historical events soon to pass in panoramic succession before the eyes of the seer. Conspicuous among these are those which represent the church, or kingdom, of Jesus Christ. This is the office assigned in the vision to the occupants of the twenty-four encircling thrones. So far, there seems to be substantial agreement amongst interpreters. Upon the question why these representatives of Christ's spiritual kingdom, or church, should be twenty-four in number, opinions differ. Some fanciful reasons are given, which need not be noticed here. A more consistent one supposes an allusion to the twenty-four courses of the Jewish priests, to one of which Zachariah, "of the course of Abia," is spoken of (Luke 1 : 5) as belonging. Grotius assumes—with no evidence to go upon, however—that in the Church at Jerusalem there may have been this number of elders, and that this supplies a reason for what appears here. Others take the number as denoting the doubling of that of the original twelve tribes, to indicate the incoming of the Gentiles into the Christian Church. Our own preference is for the view which takes the twenty-four elders as representative of the twelve heads of tribes under the Old Dispensation, and the twelve apostles under the New. How this view stands related to the general theory of interpretation adopted for this portion of the book, together with the special significance of this feature in the vision, we notice more at large in the General Comments below. The "white raiment" in which they are "clothed," explained elsewhere (19 : 8) as "the righteousness of saints," has no reference to the personal character, of either patriarchs or apostles, but only to the *representative* character of these elders seen in the vision.—**And they had on their heads crowns of gold.** The white robes

5 And out of the throne proceeded [a] lightnings and thunderings and voices: [b] and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are [c] the seven Spirits of God.
6 And before the throne *there was* [d] a sea of glass like unto crystal: [e] and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before [f] and behind.

5 garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of
6 God; and before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal; and in the midst [1] of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of

[a] ch. 8:5; 16:18....[b] Ex. 27:23; 2 Chron. 4:20; Ezek. 1:13; Zech. 4:2....[c] ch. 1:4; 3:1; 5:6....[d] Ex. 38:8; ch. 15:2....
[e] Ezek. 1:5....[f] ver. 8.——1 Or, *before.*

and the crowns, as Alford justly remarks, show that "these twenty-four elders are not angels," as some have imagined. These are "the rewards of *endurance*"; rewards promised, as for example, in chs. 3:5; 2:10. While representing, in respect of official dignity, the spiritual kingdom of God, as comprehending both Dispensations, the robed and crowned elders represent also in that which they have thus received—the "white raiment" and the "crowns"—that holiness of character and exaltation of condition which are promised to them who are faithful unto death. The thrones in which they sit and the crowns they wear are strictly in accordance with words spoken by our Lord himself in his earthly ministry, and with the whole New Testament representation of the relation which the redeemed hold in that kingdom of grace wherein they stand. They are not as subjects to be ruled, but as *participants*, as in the struggle, so in the victory and the glory. Observe the "new song" of the four beasts and the elders in ch. 5:10—"and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

5. THE THRONE AND THE LAMPS OF FIRE. **And out of the throne proceedeth lightnings and thunderings and voices.** A like manifestation of the divine presence is seen at Exodus 19:16, where it is said that in the mount upon which God descended "there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud." In Rev. 8:5, as also 11:19, the divine majesty, sovereignty, and might, seem to be indicated by like tokens. Quite consistently with what is to follow in exhibiting the judgments of God as seen in human history, these terror-striking signs of his presence and power are given.—**And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.** Mention of "the seven Spirits which are before his throne" has already been made (1:4). In that place, it seems impossible to understand by the seven Spirits, "seven presence-angels of the highest rank," as is done by Stuart. It is inconceivable that in the words of solemn benediction there used, created beings, of however high a rank, should be associated with "him which is, and which was, and which is to come," and with "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Angels are never in the Scripture—and never should be anywhere—associated thus with the divine being in human invocation. As in 1:4, so here, we must understand by "the seven Spirits of God" the mode of representation adopted for the Holy Spirit himself—mentioned here, however, with reference, not so much to his *personality* as to his *operations*. Three things are to be specially noticed: (1) These are *lamps*—they give light; (2) they are lamps of *fire*—the element that both purifies and consumes; (3) they are in number *seven*—the number of perfection. Taking the lamps, therefore, as symbolizing the Divine Holy Spirit in his operations, we find him set forth in them as enlightening, as purifying, as consuming dross and evil, and as possessing in his operation, as in his person, divine perfection.

6-8. THE CRYSTAL SEA AND THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES.

6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. We should read, "And before the throne there was *as if* (ὡς) a sea of glass." The qualifying particle "as," or "as if," should be taken as applying to the whole description; not simply that the sea was like crystal; but the appearance itself was that of a sea—not an actual sea—but what had that appearance. Here again we trace a notable resemblance to descriptions of the glory of God's presence found in the Old Testament; as in Ezek. 1:22, where "the likeness of the firmament" seen "upon the heads of the living creature"—on this firma-

7 aAnd the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

7 eyes before and behind. And the first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the

a Num. 2 : 2, etc.; Ezek. 1 : 10; 10 : 14.

ment the throne of Deity being placed—"was as the color of the terrible crystal. "And again, in Exodus (24:10), when Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, as they ascended into the mount, "saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." Such a representation as this crystal sea, appears therefore to belong in some measure to the Scriptural conception of God, when manifesting himself in the peculiar glory of his nature. Consistently with the symbolism implied in the crystal clearness of the splendor of his person, is that of the crystal sea. It is unwise to attempt specific interpretations of this symbolism; as, with Vitringa, denoting "the certain and constant *will* of God," or with Düsterdieck, as identical with the "river of water of life," elsewhere spoken of as "proceeding out of the throne." Least of all can we understand, with Ebrard, that "the pure and calm sea represents the creatures in their proper relation to their Creator." The conception appears to be quite a general one, and to denote, as Alford expresses it, "the purity, calmness, and majesty of God's rule" —a view which seems consistent with the fact that upon this crystal sea, or pavement *like* a shining sea, the divine throne is seen to rest. There is, also, as Alford suggests, an idea of isolation implied. The seer beholds at a distance, across the wide expanse, the throne of the Divine Majesty; while we must suppose that the encircling thrones of the elders are in like manner aloof from the immediate presence of him, whose holiness and majesty enthrone him thus in splendor "which no man can approach unto."—**And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts.** As Alford well says, the translation of the Greek word (ζῶα) by the word "beasts" is "the most unfortunate that could be imagined." Nothing could be more confusing to one seeking to form some clear idea of what is here described, and dependent wholly upon the reading of our common English Version. The Greek word means "living beings," or "living creatures." The former, is perhaps, preferable. It is used in application to these four beings, evidently, because a more specific term could not with propriety be employed. The forms seen are not those of men, nor yet of angels, nor do they appear to have *throughout* the likeness of any known being. They are wholly symbolical, and come into the vision purely as such, and with a representative intention, as we shall see. The only designation suitable for them, therefore, is this which is employed—the general, and in some sense vague one of "living creatures." Of like significance is the word (chayōth) used by Ezekiel (1: 5, 10, 13, etc.), and translated "living creatures," in our version. The words, "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne," are difficult of explanation. The four living beings cannot have been *under* the throne, as Hengstenberg and Stuart maintain; because in ch. 5: 8, they are represented in a freedom of action which makes that impossible. The best interpretation of the words is that which views these symbolical beings as placed, one at the middle point—"in the midst"—of each of the four sides of the throne, and at some distance from it. This is the view taken by Züllig, Düsterdieck, Alford, and others.—**Full of eyes before and behind.** They stood facing the throne, so that the eyes in front and behind could be seen by the beholder. The significance of the words, "full of eyes," will be noticed directly, in another connection.

7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. An ancient Jewish saying is quoted (Schœttgen, in Meyer) to this effect: "There are four which take the first place in this world: man among the creatures, the eagle among birds, the ox among cattle, and the lion among wild beasts." The word in the text (μόσχος), translated "calf, means rather a young bullock," or "a steer," and corresponds to the ox in the symbols of Ezekiel's vision (1:10),

8 And the four beasts had each of them [a]six wings about *him;* and *they were* full of eyes [b]within: and they rest not day and night, saying, [c]Holy, holy, holy, [d]Lord God Almighty, [e]which was, and is, and is to to come.

8 fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who

[a] Isa. 6: 2....[b] ver. 6....[c] Isa. 6: 3....[d] ch. 1: 8....[e] ch. 1: 4.

where also we find, with the ox, the man, the lion, and the eagle. The interpretation of these symbols, or representative forms—for such we must take them to be—may be either, that they represent divine *attributes*—as, the lion strength, the ox patience, the man intelligence, the eagle swiftness—or that they represent the animate creation, in its four great classes. Against the former of these interpretations there lies the apparently fatal objection that the four "living beings" are described in ver. 8, as day and night giving praise to God, and in ch. 5: 8, as, in company with the four and twenty elders, falling prostrate in adoration before the Lamb. We cannot suppose it to be the design of the writer to represent *divine attributes* as thus offering worship to God and the Lamb. The second explanation proposed is clearly the preferable one. It is not at all uncommon for the Scriptures to represent the creation of God as offering praise to him, as in Psalm 145: 10, we read: "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord"; and when it is added, "and thy saints shall bless thee," it is a word quite in keeping with what is shown us in the vision John describes. In the two great spheres of creation and redemption, God manifests himself. These two are here exhibited under representative forms; the created universe in those four great classes of animated being in which are supremely seen the qualities of strength, of intelligence, of patience, and of swiftness—these giving utterance to that praise which creation as a whole renders to the Creator; the redeemed church of all ages in the venerable forms of patriarchs and apostles, so seated as to show how perfect is the circle of God's redeeming plan, and in the thrones they fill showing how completely has come to pass that saying of the Lord: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may . . . . sit on thrones" . . .—**And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him.** A different pointing will give to our text a different and more correct meaning, in some respects. The word (κυκλόθεν) translated "about him," belongs with the clause next following. In a perfectly literal rendering we should read: "And the four living beings had each of them six wings apiece" [the Greek particle (ἀνὰ) a distributive word here]. The expression would be in our idiom tautological, but in the Greek is emphatic. Why six wings? If we may interpret the symbolism as in the seraphim seen by Isaiah (6: 2), "with twain he"—each seraph—"covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly," we may view the six wings as used, in the first instance, to denote *reverence* (the face covered in the divine presence), in the second *humility* (the covering of the feet), and in the third *obedience* (swiftly flying to do God's will).—**And they were full of eyes within.** Correcting the punctuation as above, we read, "And round about and within they were full of eyes," so that the whole passage will stand: "And the four living beings had each of them six wings apiece; and round about and within, they were full of eyes." This is partly a repetition, and partly a more full expression of what is said in ver. 6. It is the wings here, which are represented as "full of eyes"; as Alford and Düsterdieck explain: "Round the outside of each wing, and up the inside of each [half-expanded] wing, and of the part of the body also which was in that inside recess." In like manner, in Ezekiel's vision, the living wheels are represented as "full of eyes" (1: 18). This part of the description must be associated, if we would apprehend its significance properly, with that which follows.

8–11. WORSHIP OF THE CREATURES, AND OF THE REDEEMED.

8. And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. With this representation, as Düsterdieck shows, "the innumerable, ever-wakeful eyes" well agree. The words of the Psalmist, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," express the

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, [a] who liveth for ever and ever,
10 [b] The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, [c] and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, [d] and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 [e] Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: [f] for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

9 is and [1] who is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth [2] for ever
10 and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth [2] for ever and ever, and shall cast
11 their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

a ch. 1 : 18; 5 : 14; 15 : 7....b ch. 5 : 8, 14....c ver. 9....d ver. 4....e ch. 5 : 12....f Gen. 1 : 1; Acts 17 : 24; Ephes. 3 : 9; Col. 1 : 16; ch. 10 : 6.——1 Or, *who cometh*.....2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

same sublime idea. It should be noticed how this worship of the four living beings, representative of creation, expresses profound and adoring reverence; confessing with awe and adoration the greatness of God and the perfection of his character. They worship him as the Almighty Lord God, and the holy One, the perfect and the eternal One. Such, indeed, is the witness of creation to the Creator.

9. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever.—The translation is very imperfect. There is no word for "those" in the correct text. We should read, "And when the living creatures." The verb that follows is in the future, "shall give."

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne. We must read "the four and twenty elders *shall* fall," etc., the verb here again being in the future. This tense of the verb, however, is to be taken in a *frequentative*, rather than with a strictly future sense; the meaning being, "as often as." What we are told then, is, that the elders join with the living creatures in ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving to him that sits upon the throne.—**And worship him that liveth forever and ever.** The eternity of God is the attribute especially recognized, additional to those made conspicuous in the theophany. **And cast** [*shall cast*] **their crowns before the throne.** The act appears to have a double significance: it recognizes that the crowns are the gift of the enthroned One; and it is an act of self-humiliation, as in the presence of him "before whom no creature has any honor or glory" (Düsterdieck).

11. Saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. The Sinaitic manuscript reads: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, our Lord and God;" the Alexandrine, "Our Lord and God." Tischendorf adopts the latter. Alford quotes Düsterdieck as noting "that the word 'our' (ἡμῶν), has a force here peculiarly belonging to the twenty-four elders, as representing the redeemed, and thus standing in a covenant relation to God nearer than that of the four living beings."—**For thou hast created all things.** It is as Creator that even the representatives of the redeemed church in this place are seen paying him adoration.—**And for thy pleasure they are and were created.** Literally, "on account of," or, "because of thy will." The work of creation is an act of the divine good pleasure; the execution of God's own infinitely wise purpose, the ground of which is wholly in himself. "Are and were created" is a mistranslation. The first of the two verbs is in a past tense (ἦσαν) like the second. We should read, "Because of thy will" [because thou willedst it], "they *were*" [they existed], "and were created." Their existence was by the will of God, as by his power they were created. We may, perhaps, as this utterance of praise is by representatives of the redeemed church, understand a reference to that more ultimate purpose of creation which redemption implies.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

The exposition has, in various instances, taken note of the striking resemblance of the symbolism of this vision of God and the court of heaven to that which is found in Ezekiel and in Isaiah. To this feature, also, we have called attention in the Introduction, in our Analysis of the book, and especially in noticing the strongly Hebraistic character of the representation in this first division of the main subject, embracing Chs. IV.—XI., inclusive. We regard the church, in this portion of the book, as viewed in its Judaico-Christian conception; that is to say, as *the true Israel.* The prophecy, here, accordingly opens in much the same way as those of Ezekiel and Isaiah, in

CHAPTER V.

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne [a]a book written within and on the backside, [b]sealed with seven seals.

1 AND I saw [1]in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back,

[a] Ezek. 2 : 9, 10....[b] Isa. 29 : 11; Dan. 12 : 4.—1 Gr. *on.*

which God's purposes toward Israel as a nation were to be declared. It will be found, as we proceed, that the symbolism used throughout this division of the book, in opening up views of the future of the Christian Church, as revealed to John and through him to the churches of his own and of each succeeding age, continues to hold this resemblance to that of the older prophets named, including, also, that of the prophet Joel.

The grouping of representative forms in the vision, has a marked significance, when associated with what is revealed of the Divine Majesty in its enthronement. God appears in those attributes that most declare his greatness and his glory as the infinitely holy and the Almighty. The living creatures, symbolizing creation, and the four and twenty enthroned elders, symbolizing the redeemed church, represent his divine work in its two grand spheres, those in which and through which his character, in the splendor of its infinite excellence, shines forth to the view of all intelligences. As God, thus glorious, thus enthroned, attended thus by adoring witnesses to his works of creation and redemption, he now discloses to his servant the things which must shortly come to pass. The events to be set forth in vision, the mighty vicissitudes of time and change, the judgments to be visited upon powerful enemies and the victorious deliverances wrought for his people, even in their weakness and in the hour of their apparent defeats—these are seen to be all at the will of him who sits enthroned, encircled by those that testify in adoring worship to the wonders wrought, alike when he made the world and when he redeemed it. Most fittingly and significantly, therefore, does this sublime theophany meet us at the very threshold of the revelations now to be made.

A suggestive remark by Dr. Vaughan, in his lecture upon this chapter, may be added here: "If the thought of the four living beings which typify creation has something of comfort for us in reference to the world above, how much more that of men of our own flesh and likeness, who are already clad in the robes of priesthood, and admitted to the right hand of God and to the ministrations of the heavenly temple! That world is not all peopled with strange and unknown forms. Men are there; patriarchs, prophets, apostles; saints and martyrs; common men, too, poor men, humble men, men whom we have known, men whom we have loved, familiar forms, friends and guides, young and old, now made perfect through sufferings; they are there; and one part, no doubt, of their employment is adoration; they fall down before him that sits on the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord.' But this is not all. It is no fancied lesson which bids us read in this chapter a proof of their care also and interest in us; of their being, as it were, members of a heavenly council of which the subject is earth, earth and its fortunes, the church in its struggle with the world, the soul of the Christian combatant in its battle with the powers of evil."

When the attending angel in his trumpet voice summons John to "come up hither," he adds, "and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." This is equivalent to an assertion of the *prophetic* character of the revelations about to be made. That rationalistic method of interpretation, therefore, which throws out the prophetic element, and treats the book as exhibiting matters of current or recent history in a kind of allegory, comes directly in conflict with what the book itself declares of its own nature. "Things which must be hereafter"—that is its subject. The attitude of the seer is that of one foretelling things to come. The alternative is clear; either this prophetic character must be admitted, and the theory of interpretation adjusted accordingly, or the very integrity of the author and of his book must stand impeached.

THE SEALED BOOK

1-4. THE BOOK.

1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne. Properly speaking, the "Revelation" (the ἀποκαλυψις) here

begins. All up to this point has been more or less preliminary and preparatory. Exceedingly significant, too, is this opening scene, in which we have the sealed book, and the Divine Person who alone is able to open it. We ought, as it would seem, to connect what appears here with the words of announcement in ch. 1: 1: "The Revelation of *Jesus Christ*, which *God* gave unto him." The book of that Revelation is now seen in ("upon" ἐπί) the hand of him that sits upon the throne; and, as appears eventually, it is the Lord Jesus, in his manifestation as the Redeemer, who takes the book and breaks the seal. In this way the two great facts are made evident and significant, (1) that the disclosures here made of divine purpose, God himself makes, while (2) the medium and instrument of them, is that same Being who, during the whole course of human history, from that beginning which is already upon record to that end which is still a prophecy, is the Daysman, the Mediator, in every way, between God and men.—**A book, written within and on the backside.** Of course, it is only as we rightly conceive the form of the book that we can understand this description. It is a book in the ancient, not the modern, form—a roll; in this case written upon both sides, so that the writing appears both within and without; within and *on the back*, or the side "which, to one reading the inner, was *behind*" (Alford). Parchment rolls written in this way appear to have been called "opistographs," or rolls "written on the back," meaning that both sides were covered. In the present case there seems to be a significance in the fact of the roll being thus covered in every part. It implies, says Alford, "completeness of the contents as containing the divine counsels; there was no room for addition to that which was written therein." So likewise, Düsterdieck. In Hengstenberg's view, we have a "prototype of this book" at Ezek. 2: 9, 10: "And when I looked, behold a hand was sent unto me [*reached out to me*]: and lo, a roll of a book was therein: And he spread it before me, and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Fully carrying out this idea that the book in Ezekiel is the "prototype" of the book here, Hengstenberg understands the latter also as filled with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe," or, as he quotes Schöttgen, a record of "the sentence which is given by the judge and his councillors against the enemies of the church." Consistently with this view, he makes the contents of the Sealed Book include only so much as is found in chs. 6–8: 1, at which latter point, he claims, "an entirely new series of revelations" begins. Of this last we fail to find the needful evidence. The series at the point indicated seems plainly continuous, save so far as new action is employed, with another class of representative figures and symbols, to carry on the disclosures of divine purpose as written in the book. Besides, nearly the whole of ch. 7 is occupied, not with executions of divine judgment against enemies of the church, but with grace and redemption wrought for the church itself. It is much more natural and consistent to view the book as covering, in its symbolical significance, all the revelations here made, down to the very end. In this figurative sense, the *Apocalypse*, the revelation, is simply the opening of the book.—**Sealed with seven seals.** Some commentators have understood by this that there were seven distinct writings, each with its separate seal. Others, as Elliott, in "Horæ Apocalypticæ," have exercised no small ingenuity in showing how each seal, viewing the writing as one, represented a separate section of the whole roll, as it was unfolded. Alford seems to be mistaken in saying that the book was not to be "opened" or unrolled. The opening is implied in ver. 5, and elsewhere. Stuart's comment is as follows: "To make all parts of the description congruous, we must suppose the roll to have a seal upon the extreme end that was rolled up, which would of course prevent its being unrolled. When the first seal was broken, the MS. could be unrolled, until one came to a second seal; and so in succession of the rest. Now if these seals were put on so as to be visible at the ends of the roll (which might easily be done by some small label attached to each seal indicative of its place), then John could have seen the seven seals, if the end of the roll was toward him; *i. e.*, he could at least have seen what indicated their presence." It is perhaps unnecessary to enter into all these details. They may, however, aid the general conception. It should be borne in

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
3 And no man in [a]heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.
4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

2 close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to
3 open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon.
4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy

[a] ver. 13.

mind that the book is not to be read, nor does it have any other connection with the several visions which from time to time appear, than as *symbolizing* that perfect scheme of divine purpose and fulfillment with reference alike to the church and the world, parts and features of which the successive visions disclose in outline. The seals denote that these are "secret" purposes—"parts" of those "ways" of God, which are determined only in acts of his own infinite thought and infinite will. The seals teach, as Hengstenberg quotes Vitringa, that "the divine decrees before they are carried into execution, or have by God been antecedently disclosed, are discoverable by no one of the immortal angels or of mortal men; they are shut and concealed from all." The breaking of each seal indicates that *so much* of this purpose, whether of judgment or of mercy, as appears in the action of the vision in that connection is disclosed.

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice. The significance of the epithet "strong," and of the clause "with a loud voice," closely related in themselves, is found in what appears in the verse following. In heaven, in earth, and under the earth, the voice is heard.—**Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?** The word "worthy" (ἄξιος), here, should probably be viewed as equivalent to "equal to" (ἱκανὸς), "capable of." It implies, however, more than mere *ability;* comprehending, with the simple idea of capability, that of worthiness. This inquiry, therefore, sounding through creation, calls for one who shall be in every way the fit person to act as the instrument by whom God will make to his church and to the world these discoveries of his will.

3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth. We should read, "no one" (οὐδείς). The statement made is not limited to human beings, but comprehends all creatures of God, in whatever part of the universe. The language used is evidently meant to be absolutely comprehensive of creation. We must mark the suggestion as to the real dignity and place of him who finally comes forward in this great office, that whatever he may be, he is certainly not a creature. —**Was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.** The Greek word in the best manuscripts for "nor," "neither" (οὔτε instead of οὐδέ), according to grammatical usage, as Winer shows, would make the clause, "neither to look thereon," climacteric, as if it read, "nor even so much as to look thereon." The representation of inability and unworthiness to discharge this office is thus made the more intensely emphatic.—**And I wept much, because no man** [*no one*] **was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.** The clause, "and to read," should be omitted. It is not in the oldest manuscripts, while, as said before, the book was not to be read. The weeping suggests with what intensity of emotion John gazes upon what is thus before him in vision. It is a rapt and exalted feeling, not only making real to him this which he beholds, but causing him to enter into its significance with keenest appreciation. Strange it is that any interpreter should imagine the emotion here shown to be that of disappointed curiosity. It was, rather, a feeling occasioned by all the circumstances taken together, which had awakened expectation, with a profound sense of the magnitude of that whose disclosure seemed thus interrupted. Deeply impressive must have been the awful silence which followed the proclamation by the "strong angel," overwhelming in its testimony to the sacredness of these sealed mysteries which no creature must declare, and yet to the infinite momentousness of their import. The human nature of the beholder fails under the strain, and relieves itself with tears.

5-7. THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, [a]the Lion of the tribe of Juda, [b]the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, [c]and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood [d]a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and [e]seven eyes, which are [f]the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

5 to open the book, or to look thereon: and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

6 And I saw [1]in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, that are the [2]seven

[a] Gen. 49: 9, 10; Heb. 7: 14... [b] Isa. 11: 1, 10; Rom. 15: 12; ch. 22: 16....[c] ver. 1; ch. 6: 1....[d] Isa. 53: 7; John 1: 29, 36; 1 Pet. 1: 19; ch. 13: 8; ver. 9, 12....[e] Zech. 3: 9; 4: 10....[f] ch. 4: 5.——1 Or, *between the throne with the four living creatures, and the elders*....2 Some ancient authorities omit *seven*.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me. There is nothing to identify the elder who speaks, although some of the ancient commentators imagined that the record which Matthew makes of that saying of our Lord, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" warrants us in finding *him* in the elder who now speaks. All that the words before us justify us in saying is that *one* of these representative persons addresses to his brother, not yet enabled to see "face to face," what shall comfort and reassure him. We may notice, in the connection, how what was still hidden from John, though now "in the Spirit," and beholding these wonders, is represented as known and understood by the elder who speaks to him, though so lately, like himself, seeing all spiritual things as "through a glass, darkly."—**Weep not; behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda.** The reference seems to be to the words of Jacob in Gen. 49: 9. It is the kingly nature of the lion that is the subject of allusion.—**The Root of David.** Here the reference is to such passages as Isa. 11: 1: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." The Greek word, in our present passage (ῥίζα), does not mean simply "root," but as well the shoot which springs from the root. The allusion in this place, as in Isaiah and elsewhere, seems to be to that obscurity into which the royal line of David had fallen—the tree decayed, the root surviving, though buried from sight. From this buried root, however, a new growth springs. Thus obscure, in one sense, yet thus royal in another, was the human lineage of our Lord.—**Hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.** The words "hath prevailed" should be regarded as significant and emphatic. Their import is, not merely that by virtue of the dignity of his person, of his superiority to all creatures, not one of whom had been found worthy to open the book, is he now to have this office given him; but he "hath prevailed," hath overcome and triumphed with especial reference to this. In other words, the office he now fills, as the instrument for disclosing what is to be here revealed, belongs to him by virtue of that which he achieved in his humiliation, suffering, and death. It is as one raised from that humiliation to possess again the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and thus become "head over all things" in this Dispensation of Grace, of whose coming fortunes disclosures are now to be made, that he has "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts ["*living creatures*"], **and in the midst of the elders.** Stuart's translation of the Greek word for "in the midst of" (ἐν μέσῳ), as "between," is very singular. It is evidently made under the exegetical stress occasioned by his view of the place of the "living creatures," as *under* and supporting the throne. Consistently with this he must make the position of the Lamb to be "between" the throne, with the four living creatures supporting it, and the circle of elders. The correct translation of the phrase, however, is that which our common version gives, "in the midst of." The statement in the text, therefore, must be that in the midst of the group made by the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders, the Lamb was standing. His exact position is not more precisely given; yet from what appears subsequently, where he is represented as taking the book out of the hand of him who sits upon the throne, we may suppose him to stand near the throne, and partly at one side; perhaps upon the sea of glass, although nothing in the description necessarily suggests this.—**Stood a Lamb as it had been slain.** Two words in the New

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand [a]of him that sat upon the throne.

7 Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he [1]taketh *it* out of the right hand of him

[a] ch. 4: 2.—[1] Gr. *hath taken.*

Testament Greek are used for "lamb"—one (ἀμνός), meaning in general "a lamb," the other a diminutive (ἀρνίον), "a young lamb." It is worthy of notice that the latter is the word used in the Apocalypse, and that as among the New Testament books, it is peculiar to it, with a single exception—the same word occurring also at John 21: 15. Elsewhere, the former word (ἀμνός) is used. The diminutive, "a young lamb," suggests with peculiar force the idea of "perfect innocence," as Stuart says, and also brings forward with especial emphasis, that of a sacrificial and propitiatory offering. In like manner, in the Old Testament, as in Lev. 9: 3, we have mention made of a lamb "of the first year" as required to be taken for a burnt-offering. The fanciful notion of Bengel, which Hengstenberg seems to adopt, that the allusion is to the early age at which Jesus suffered death, as compared with the long life of the patriarchs represented by the elders, cannot, of course, be entertained. Still, the exclusive use of the diminutive term, throughout this book, with the suggestion of tenderness implied, "a young lamb," is worthy of note. It makes prominent the Lord's self-sacrifice in man's behalf, the meekness, patience, innocence, of his nature, and that fulfillment in his person of the types of the old law, which links the two Dispensations in one. Of the significance of this grouping of symbolical titles applied to him here—"the Lion of the tribe of Juda," "the Root of David," "a young lamb, as it had been slain"—we speak below. The expression, "as it had been slain," may be given, paraphrastically, "as it had been slain in sacrifice." The Greek word has this meaning. The expression must indicate that the Lamb, as seen, bears upon him his death-wounds; the wound in the throat, especially, indicated by the Greek word (ἐσφαγμένον). **Having seven horns and seven eyes.** Horns are symbols of power; eyes, of discernment and consequent knowledge. The number "seven," as elsewhere, denotes perfection.—**Which are the seven Spirits of God.** Does the relative clause, here, "which are," refer to both the horns and the eyes, or to the latter only? Alford thinks that the reference is alone to the eyes; and he would read: "Having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." The other construction, he says, "would be, of course, grammatically possible; but it seems otherwise decided here, both by the context, and by Zech. 4: 10: 'They are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.'" The concluding words of the verse in our present passage, **sent forth into all the earth,** do truly seem a direct allusion to the passage in Zechariah. It is not, however, such in its nature as to necessarily restrict the reference in "the seven Spirits of God" to the seven eyes of the Lamb. Neither does the context appear to require this restriction, while the punctuation and grammatical arrangement of the passage, as it stands in the Greek, makes the most natural construction to be: "seven horns and seven eyes, which are [both the horns and the eyes] the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. "We take, as in ch. 3: 1, the "seven Spirits of God" as denoting the perfection of divine endowment possessed by our Lord, and in the present case implying alike the divine power and the divine wisdom which he exercises, even as the Lamb that had been slain. The clause "sent into all the earth," applies to "the Seven Spirits of God," and denotes the omnipresence of that Spirit of power [the horns] and wisdom [the eyes] whose perfection the number seven symbolizes.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. It is, says Düsterdieck (*unnöthig und geschmacklos*), "unnecessary and frivolous," to inquire whether we are to imagine the Lamb to have in part a human form, with human hands. The difficulty, nevertheless, suggested by the question, in what way the Lamb, as a lamb, could take the book, is a real one, and to dispose of it in Düsterdieck's off-hand way, will scarcely satisfy any student of the passage. The question, here, is pertinent, whether the Lamb, though he appears first in that form, continues to retain it. He certainly does not bear this form where first, in the New Testament, we find the word applied to him,

8 And when he had taken the book, [a] the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them [b] harps, and golden vials full of odours, [c] which are the prayers of saints.

8 that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which

a ch. 4: 8, 10....*b* ch. 14: 2; 15: 2....Ps. 141: 2; ch. 8: 3, 4.

(John 1: 29). The action described in the sixth chapter, where the Lamb opens successively the seven seals, suggests the idea of a change such as that, though still known as the Lamb, he bears the human form. In due time (19: 11), he is seen going forth as leader of the armies of heaven, evidently in form as a man. It does not seem a violent construction of the representation as it stands to suppose that in his first appearance upon the scene the Lamb has the form which symbolizes his office as the suffering Saviour; and yet, that by that kind of change which consists wholly with the nature of a vision, or of a dream (in this latter case often experienced), as he advances to take the book out of the hand of him that sits upon the throne, he appears as a man. We do not see how else the action in this chapter and the following, where the Lamb takes the book and breaks the seals, can be made even conceivable.

8-10. The New Song.

8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts [living ones] **and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb.** That this is an act of real worship, is shown by what appears in ver. 13, where we find not only these here mentioned, but the whole sentient universe, ascribing "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power" both "unto him that sitteth upon the throne," and "*unto the Lamb.*" The significance of this we note in the "General Comments." It should be observed how a like act of worship is described in ch. 4: 10, 11, as paid to the Enthroned One, the divine honors yielded to whom are here shared by the Lamb.—**Having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors.** It seems agreed by critics upon the construction of this passage, that the participle "having," (ἔχοντες), is to be construed, not with the two preceding (ζῶα and πρεσβύτεροι), "beasts" (living creatures) and "elders," but only with the latter. While it is true that by grammatical rules the participle may agree with both these antecedents, though they differ in gender, still its reference is limited to the latter, for two reasons, as stated by Alford: (1) It is unnatural to suppose figures described as the four living beings are, having harps or vials; and even if this is not to be pressed, yet (2) it is inconsistent with the right view of the four living creatures, as representing creation, that they should present the "prayers of the saints"; to which may be added (3) Stuart's suggestion that the song of praise for redemption seems appropriate only to those who represent in the vision the redeemed church of all ages. "Having every one of them harps," is more exactly rendered: "Each one having a harp," etc.—**Which are the prayers of the saints.** By the word translated "vials" (φιάλας), Stuart understands "bowls or goblets, having more breadth than depth; to which species of vessels our word vial, as now employed, does not at all correspond. Evidently a vessel with a broad mouth or opening is designated, for the incense is to be burned in it, for the sake of diffusing over the place the sweet odor which it would yield." The lexicon defines the word "a bowl, bason, cup, goblet, urn, phial." What meaning shall be given to the words, "which are the prayers of the saints"? Does this mean *intercessory* prayer—prayer offered by the saints, or redeemed ones, for those yet in the flesh? No such meaning can be given to the passage without forcing, out of all reason, its natural and necessary sense. Evidently, the harps and the vials, or bowls, are to be treated as symbolizing, the former the *praises*, the latter the *prayers*, of those represented by the word "saints" (ἁγίων). Romanist writers, of course, take this word "saints" in its Romanist sense; one of them, Cornelius à Lapide, bidding us "note here, as opposed to Vigilantius, Luther, Calvin, and other contemners of the saints (*hagiomachos*), that the saints pray for us, and offer our prayers to God." If it be borne in mind that these elders are simply symbolical and representative forms, in which we are to see, not individual persons, as such, but the whole redeemed Church of God, as if present and

9 And [a]they sung a new song, saying, [b]Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: [c]for thou wast slain, and [d]hast redeemed us to God by thy blood [e]out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
10 [f]And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

9 are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every
10 tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and priests; and

a Ps. 40:3; ch. 14:3....b ch. 4:11....c ver. 6....d Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Ephes. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 1:7; ch. 14:4....e Dan. 4:1; 6:25; ch. 7:9; 11:9; 14:6....f Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; ch. 1:6; 20:6; 22:5.

joining in the worship, we shall perceive at once that the Romanist view of the passage becomes an impossible one. The harp, therefore, which each holds, is a symbol of the praise every redeemed one offers to the God of his salvation and to the Lamb slain for him. The golden bowl, or censer, smoking with incense, symbolizes, in general, the preciousness and acceptableness of prayer in the name of Jesus—"set" before him "as incense," (Ps. 141:2). The idea of *intercessory* office or action is nowhere here implied.

9. And they sung a new song. It should read: "And they *sing* (ᾄδουσιν) a new song," the verb being in the present tense. The description is thus made more vivid, and as if, even as he relates his vision, John hears still the notes of the new song. In what sense *new?* Since the song is the song of all the redeemed, in every age and in every nation since the world began, now represented in these symbolical persons of the vision, is it not rather the *old* song, the song of all the ages? It is thus new, because never heard in all the ages of the past up to the time when redemption for man was first proclaimed. It is the song, too, which, however old it may be, is forever new—the song of the redeemed. It is new, also, and especially, in the sense that it recognizes here a new phase in the office and work of him to whom, in the song, praise is given. It should be observed that the word here translated "new" (καινὴν), denotes what is *new in kind*, not new in point of time, to express which a different word (νέος) is employed. The special force of the word in this place we see more clearly as we mark the import of the song.—**Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof.** The Lamb slain comes forward in a new manifestation of his wonderful being, and in new acts of that mediatorial sovereignty to which he has been raised. It is he alone in the universe who is found "worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof"; he alone who may become the instrument of this Revelation, as he is also of the redemption wrought by his blood. —**For thou wast slain.** Düsterdieck justly points out that in these several verbs, "wast slain," "hast redeemed" ("*didst*" redeem), "hast made" ("*didst* make), are indicated the grounds of the worthiness to take the book and loose its seals. The clause is introduced by a causal conjunction "because" (ὅτι). But all these *imply* that in the Lamb which is the ultimate and supreme reason for all. Only as one entitled in himself to the praise and worship here given to him as one divine, was he *able* thus to redeem and exalt his people. Because of what he *is* as the Redeemer, and what he *has done* in the redemption, is he now "worthy" to take upon him this other great office.—**And hast redeemed** [*purchased*] **us to God by thy blood.** The Alexandrine manuscript omits "us" (ἡμᾶς), and Alford and Düsterdieck both reject it as an interpolation. Tischendorf also omits it. If this reading be accepted, the object of the verb "redeem," must be regarded as unexpressed; so that we should translate, "hast redeemed (*didst redeem*) to God by thy blood," simply the general fact of the redemption being stated. The word "persons," or something equivalent would naturally be supplied, the verb "redeem" (redeeming by purchase) being transitive. **Out of every kindred,** ["tribe," φυλῆς) **and tongue, and people, and nation.** This repetition seems to be chiefly for the purpose of emphasis. Alford thinks that "the quadruple *number*" indicates "universality." That seems rather a strained view.

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests. Here, again, we must note variations in the reading of the original text. Instead of "us" (ἡμᾶς), the oldest manuscripts have "them" (αὐτούς). The words, "kings and priests," become "a kingdom and a priesthood," according to the Si-

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels [a] round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was [b] ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
12 Saying with a loud voice, [c] Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

11 they reign upon the earth. And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thou-
12 sands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and

a ch. 4: 4, 6....*b* Ps. 68: 17; Dan. 7: 10; Heb. 12: 22....*c* ch. 4: 11.

naitic manuscript, and "a kingdom and priests," according to the Alexandrine. Tischendorf adopts the reading, "a kingdom and priests," which it is probably safest to follow. We should then read, "and hast made them to our God a kingdom and priests"—in the sense already noticed; as sharing, by their union with him, the kingship and priesthood of the Redeemer himself. The words cannot imply a priestly or intercessory office in such heavenly beings as those elders in the vision, in any such sense as Romanists claim; for, in the parallel passage at Rev. 1: 6—"and hath made us a kingdom and priests unto God"—the very same thing is said in evident application to *all* who belong to Christ, whether in earth or in heaven.—**And we shall reign on the earth.** Consistently with the changed reading above, we must read, here, either, according to the Sinaitic manuscript, "they shall reign," or the Alexandrine, "they reign." This reign upon the earth can no otherwise be understood than as the participation of the redeemed in the ever advancing triumph and conquest of the Redeemer's kingdom. The revelations soon to be made will exhibit this kingdom in a scene of struggle, and sometimes of apparent defeat; yet as ultimately triumphing, till at last "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." So are his people one with him, that his triumph is theirs, and his glorious kingdom theirs also. It will be seen from this whole view of the passage, with its corrected readings, that the elders in the vision are offering praise and adoration to the Lamb, not on account of their own salvation, but because of what they behold in redemption itself, with its wonder-working achievements.

11-14. THE ANGELIC RESPONSE, AND CHORUS OF CREATION.

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders. The meaning will be more clear if we read, "*I saw.*" What John says is, "I saw, and I heard," or, "I saw and heard." The choir of angels was visible to him, at the same time that he heard them. They appeared as encompassing the entire group previously seen, "the throne and the living beings and the elders." Thus he has before him what represents the intelligent and sentient universe, Creator and creature; the Divine Trinity, as reigning, as redeeming, as illuminating and regenerating—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the redeemed church, "the innumerable company of angels," and even the creation itself, in the representative forms which appear as symbolizing it.—**And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.** "Myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands." There is no attempt at expressing a definite number, but simply a representation of the angelic host as innumerable.

12. Saying with a loud voice. What follows is the utterance of the angels, as they join in a united acclaim of adoration and praise.—**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.** It should be especially remarked that this angelic chorus of praise is in honor of *the Lamb*.—**To receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.** "To receive" ascriptions of, is the meaning. We should observe that the like ascription, though with fewer particulars named, in the verse following, is made, "unto him that sitteth upon the throne," as well as "unto the Lamb." These are, then, divine honors which the Lamb receives, and the attributions made of "power, and wisdom," etc., should be interpreted accordingly; "power," as denoting almightiness, "wisdom," as this attribute in its divine and infinite sense, "riches," "all the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2: 9), and "strength," efficient might, "honor," that honor which in the verse below is given to God himself; and so with the "glory" and the "blessing,"

13 And [a]every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, [b]Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him [c]that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 [d]And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him [e]that liveth for ever and ever.

13 glory, and blessing. And every created thing that is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, *be* the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, [i]for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

a Phil. 2:10; ver. 3....*b* 1 Chron. 29:11; Rom. 9:5; 16:27; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; ch. 1:6....*c* ch. 6:16; 7:10....
d ch. 19:4....*e* ch. 4:9, 10.——i Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

the latter word being employed, as Alford says, "in the sense so frequent when the word and its cognate verb are used of an act passing from man to God, viz., that of ascribed praise."

13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying. The Sinaitic manuscript omits "and under the earth." If retained, the clause will denote simply the world of spirits, the "underworld." Tischendorf, and other authorities, retain it.—**Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.** The praise rendered to the Lamb by the chorus of angels is re-echoed by the universe of created being, he that sitteth upon the throne being included in the worship thus paid.

14. And the four beasts said, Amen. To the chorus of creation the four living beings, as its terrestrial representatives, respond.—**And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever.** The corrected reading, followed by Tischendorf and the new revision is, "And the elders fell down and worshipped." The picture is a wonderful one; the sweet, resounding chorus of the angelic host; the assenting response of creation, swelling its own acclaim of praise in the mingled voices of all creatures, the harmony filling the universe; as these die away, the solemn "Amen" of the four living beings; and last of all, the silent adoration of the elders, as they lie prostrate before the throne.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It is unnecessary to do much more than simply mention some of the various opinions held by commentators as to what is imported, in the vision, by the book with seven seals; such as (1) that it denoted the Old Testament, or the book of ancient prophecy, "sealed till the time of the end" (Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Victorinus, Augustine, Jerome, and in fact most ancient authors). This view is implied in that wider one which is here preferred, viz., that the sealed book denotes the as yet unrevealed divine purpose, foreshadowed in ancient prophecies, and now more fully disclosed, though still couched in vision and symbol. The idea held, however, by many of the old writers alluded to—that the Apocalypse simply brings to light in its fulfillment the scheme of redemption as intimated in Old Testament prophecies—is inconsistent with what is said in Rev. 1:1, that this "Revelation of Jesus Christ" is "to show unto his servants things which must," at the time it was given, "shortly come to pass"—that is to say, things *then future;* whereas, the types of ancient prophecy had then already been fulfilled in the person, and ministry, and suffering of the Lord. Yet so far as those older prophecies related to the kingdom of God, in its broad sense, and specially in its relation to human history in all ages, they may, in a general way, be taken as implied in the contents of the book held in the hand of the Enthroned One. (2) Wetstein's notion that the sealed book is "God's writing of divorce against the Jewish nation," is too fanciful to even need attention. (3) We have already noticed the view of Hengstenberg, who follows Schöttgen, that the "book records the sentence, which is given by the judge and the councillors [as such he takes the enthroned Deity with the encircling group of elders] against the enemies of the church"; a view, as we have seen, altogether too restricted. (4) Others take it as the Apocalypse, itself, qualifying this, however, with the addition that the book represents the counsels of divine Providence, with reference to the church and the world. The most simple and natural view is the safe one. The place of the book, in the vision, like the whole scene to which it

belongs, is symbolical, and is to be interpreted in its relation to all else that is here present to the eye of the seer. "Things which must shortly come to pass," are about to be exhibited to him, in vision and symbol. What they import is implied in the book. They are fulfillments of divine purpose, and of that purpose this book is the record. Its seals denote that "secrecy" in which this purpose has hitherto lain in the mind of God. The breaking of each seal indicates the disclosure of *so much* of divine purpose. In this sense the book *is* the Apocalypse; only not as a book to be opened and *read*, but as the Apocalyptic symbol.

We speak of that which follows the opening of each seal as "a disclosure." It is disclosure, however, in the prophetic, not the historic sense. That which is historic may be read and understood; that which is prophetic lies before the reader or the beholder as comprehensible only "in part," and capable of full apprehension only when "that which is perfect is come"—the fulfillment. Thus there was a time when all which related to the coming of the Redeemer, and "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," was prophetic, and when the ancient men of God studied earnestly to know "what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." What was prophetic, dim, shrouded in mystery, to them, is historic to us. The Apocalypse, as the record of what was revealed to John as vision, lies before us as the ancient prophecy lay before the ancient student of the Messianic promises. It is a "disclosure," in the same sense that those Messianic predictions were: *prophetic* disclosure, becoming historic only in the fulfillment; and then, only, rightly understood.

There are two points of doctrine brought to view in this chapter, in a wonderfully emphatic and vivid way; the one relating to the *person* of our Lord, the other to *his redeeming work*. As to the former, we find him appearing, in this chapter, as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda," as "the Root," or root-Shoot, "of David," and as the Lamb "as it had been slain." We thus see him in his human manifestation; his human descent as of the stock of Abraham, the tribe of Judah; his royal lineage, as of the family of David; and in his relation to the types of the Old Dispensation, as their substance and fulfillment. But two remarkable facts appear, in this connection—the first, that it is after the summoning voice has in vain sounded throughout creation, and no *creature* been found worthy to "open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof," that the Lamb appears and receives the book from the hand of him that sits upon the throne. The mysterious and wonderful Person who thus comes forward in this great office is, therefore, *not a creature*. The second notable fact is that to the Lamb precisely the same worship is paid, with identical ascriptions of praise, as to him that sits upon the throne. Could there be a more striking and conclusive testimony to the divinity of our Lord?

The redeeming work of the Lamb is set forth under similarly striking aspects. His appearance, in the office that he now fills, under the figure of *a lamb*, is itself significant in a high degree. The word (ἀρνίον) used in the Greek, "a *young* lamb," makes the representation all the more remarkable. That which is the very image of innocence, harmlessness, even helplessness, is taken as symbolizing the personality of him who is here revealed in an office that no created being, not even any highest angel or archangel was found "worthy" to fill. We must infer, hence, that the worthiness of him who thus becomes the instrument of these amazing revelations is grounded in the fact of that in him which constituted him man's Redeemer. He had once said: "All power is given unto *me*" in heaven and in earth—to me, as the slain and risen Redeemer of men. This is now seen to be infinitely true. In what the redemption consists, is no less clearly set forth: "Hast redeemed to God *by thy blood*." With these words upon record—this testimony given in heaven itself—there ought not to remain among men any doubt as to the *reality*, or as to the *nature* of the Atonement made for human sin by him who was made "sin [*a sin-offering*] for us," though he "knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21).

CHAPTER VI.

AND [a] I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, [b] one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

1 AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures

a ch. 5: 5, 6, 7....b ch. 4: 7.

OPENING OF THE SEALS.

1-8. THE FIRST FOUR SEALS.

1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals. The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts read, "one of the seven seals," and this reading, the revision, as will be seen, adopts. The sense is the same, in either case.—**And I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying.** "*Voice* (φωνή) of thunder" would be more exact. A different arrangement of the clauses, also, makes the sense more clear —"And I heard one of the four living creatures speaking as with a voice of thunder."—**Come and see.** Here, again, is a question of reading, in the Greek. The Alexandrine manuscript—one of the oldest and best—has simply, "Come" (ἔρχου); the Sinaitic, "Come and see" (ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε); the manuscript followed by King James' translators, "Come and behold," or, "and look" (ἔρχου καὶ βλέπε). The point is not without importance, since upon it depends very much the interpretation to be given to the words as they stand. The English and American revisers translate, as will be noticed, with simply the word, "Come"; with the remark in the margin, "Some ancient authorities add, *and see.*" Stuart, following Hahn, translates, "Come;" Hengstenberg, "Come and see," as the utterance of the first living creature, "Come" as that of each of the remaining three; Düsterdieck, "Come"; Alford and Ellicott's Commentary, "Come." All depends upon the question which of the ancient readings shall be regarded as most authoritative—a question which can hardly be decided with positiveness; as whatever answer is given must be so much a matter of opinion.

If the translation, "Come and see," be preferred, then the words must be understood as addressed to John, although their meaning should not be pressed too literally. We cannot suppose him summoned to draw near in such a way as to look upon the roll, to find thereon, in pictured form, the scenes described. Nothing in the description indicates that the pages of the roll were thus used, while the vivid and intensely realistic tone of the whole most decidedly imports that John beholds the successive appearances, as they follow each other throughout the book, in vision, as if in parts of a vast drama, with scenery appropriate. To view the successive scenes as sketches, or pictures on the roll, is to belittle the whole representation. We must take the words, if we translate, "Come and see," as rather a summons to give especial attention to what is about to occur. Our own preference, however, is upon the whole for the rendering, "Come." The judgment of the latest revisers of the New Testament, in their treatment of the passage, has great weight with us; while it seems more likely that copyists should have interpolated the words, under the impression that the sense is defective without them, than that, if originally written, they should have been dropped. But, in that case, how shall we understand this summoning word, "Come"? The descriptive clause in the connection, "as it were the noise of thunder," suggests that there must be more in it than simply an address to the one man who is beholding. Such a voice of thunder—so majestic and far-sounding—would appear to belong, rather, to the scene about to transpire as an essential feature of it, and as if intended to lend impressiveness to the scene itself. Alford, founding upon the fact that in each of the four instances the word is spoken by one of the four living creatures, representatives of the sentient creation, sees in this fourfold repetition of the word, "the groaning and travailing together of creation for the manifestation of the sons of God, expressed in each case in a prayer for Christ's coming." Consistently with this, he sees also "in the things revealed when the seals are opened, his [Christ's] fourfold preparation for his coming on earth." There is in this conception so much that is in keeping with the majestic and vast significance of the vision as a whole, that one may be strongly inclined, at first view, to adopt it. But the second thought finds serious difficulty in the

2 And I saw, and behold [a] a white horse: [b] and he that sat on him had a bow; [c] and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

2 saying as with a voice of thunder, Come[1]. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

a Zech. 6:3; ch. 19:11....*b* Ps. 45:4, 5; LXX....*c* Zech. 6:11; ch. 14:14.—1 Some ancient authorities add, *and see.*

fact that nothing in the vision itself, nor anywhere in this part of the account given of the wonders seen, implies a reference to that second coming. It seems to be required that we shall find the intention and meaning of this summoning word in the connection where it stands, rather than bring in an interpretation from without, and from very *far* without, besides. Hengstenberg may have suggested the correct view where he says, in allusion to that which follows the opening of the first seal: "The voice of thunder is *a suitable announcement of the God-man conqueror.*" He does not follow up what he here suggests, nor does he base upon it his own interpretation of the word, in its significance; for he makes it to be an address to John to "come and see." But, after all, is it not the most natural and consistent view to regard the word *as* an "announcement"? Or, may we not even say, that the word, "Come," is a summons, in each case, to the horse with its rider, which at once moves forth upon the scene of the vision? We are supported in this by Ellicott's Commentary *in loco.* After saying that the word cannot be addressed to John, as *a call* to draw near, since "he was near already," Mr. Boyd Carpenter, author of the Exposition of the Apocalypse in Ellicott, says: "Are the words then addressed, as Alford supposes, to Christ? It is difficult to believe that the living creature would thus cry to the Lamb, who was opening the scroll. The simplest way of answering the question is to ask another: Who did come in obedience to the voice? There is but one answer—the horseman. The living beings cry, 'Come,' and their cry is responded to by the appearance of the several riders."

2. And I saw, and behold a white horse. It is agreed among writers, apparently, that we may view the passages in Zech. 1:8–10, and 6:1, as parallel with this, and illustrative. One of the older of the more modern writers upon the Apocalypse, James Durham, of Glasgow, in lectures published at Amsterdam in 1660, remarks that, "by a horse and his rider, is understood in Scripture amongst the prophets some dispensation of the Lord to his church, brought about mediately by the ministry of angels or men, or immediately by God himself." Divine dispensations, he says, are "compared to horses and riders on them, for these reasons: (1) to let us see his sovereignty that hath all these at his command to send for good or ill, as great kings have their messengers for executing their will; (2) to show the speediness, swiftness, and unresistibleness of whatsoever dispensation he sendeth, as the horse is speedy and valiant; (3) to show the dependence of all events on his dominion, and his immediate ordering and guiding of them as a rider doth his horse; and he letteth them not run at random, or by guess, as a horse without a rider or bridle, but hath them all well ordered, whether good or bad." This may, perhaps, be taken, in the general, as a just view of the fundamental significance of the representation made under the first four seals.—**And he that sat on him had a bow.** There is a very general agreement in viewing the white horse and his rider as representing the introduction of the Gospel Dispensation. Alford suggests the appropriate caution, that we "must not too hastily introduce the person of the Lord himself." The rider here is not, so this writer thinks, and it seems to us rightly, to be identified with the rider in ch. 19:11, *et seq.*, who is, undoubtedly, the Lord Jesus, attended by the heavenly hosts. Here, the rider is, more correctly viewed, "a symbol of his [Christ's] victorious power, the embodiment of his advancing kingdom." The relation in which, in our own exposition, we place this part of the vision to those which follow at the opening of the three next seals, will appear further on. The "bow" held in the hand of the rider, may be illustrated by what we read in Ps. 45:3–5:

> Gird thy sword on the thigh, O mighty One,
> Thy honor, and thy majesty;
> And in thy majesty ride prosperously,
> For the sake of truth, and humble right,
> And thy right hand will teach thee fearful deeds.
> Thine arrows are sharp,
> In the hearts of the king's enemies;
> People shall fall under thee.—*Conant's Translation.*

3 And when he had opened the second seal, [a] I heard
the second beast say, Come and see.
4 [b] And there went out another horse *that was* red:
and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take
peace from the earth, and that they should kill one
another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the
4 second living creature saying, Come[1]. And another
horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat
thereon it was given to take [2]peace from the earth,
and that they should slay one another: and there
was given unto him a great sword.

a ch. 4: 7....b Zech. 6: 2.—1 Some ancient authorities add, *and see*....2 Some ancient authorities read, *the peace of the earth*.

—And a crown was given unto him. The crown (στέφανος), indicates sovereignty gained by victory, or conquest. The white horse, among the Romans, was a sign of victory and triumph, and upon such, in his triumphal entry of the city, the victorious emperor always rode.—**And he went forth conquering and to conquer.** The English and American revisers follow the old version in translating "conquering and to conquer." The Sinaitic manuscript reads, "conquering, and he conquered"; Alford translates, "conquering, and that he may conquer" (καὶ ἵνα νικήσῃ). The general sense is the same, in either case. The emphatic clause, "and to conquer," or, "and he conquered," or, "in order that he may conquer," strengthens the representation of one going forth victorious, as was so eminently true of the Gospel Dispensation in its opening period.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red. We change here, again, the "Come and see," to "Come," and give it the same interpretation as before. It simply announces the new figure that moves forth upon the scene; a loud thunder-tone, quite in keeping with the grandeur and impressiveness of the vision, and indicating the changes of the drama—if we may use that word in such a connection—as they occur. Some writers call attention to the form of the living creature named in connection with the opening of each seal, as in their view significant in its relation to other aspects of the vision in each case. Thus, the first living creature, we are told (4: 7), was "like a lion." This is regarded as notably in keeping with what the first seal discloses of the victorious going forth of him who is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." The second living creature was "like a calf," or young ox, the symbol of patience and endurance; regarded as suitable to the nature of the vision under the second seal, which imports conflict and suffering, even unto blood. So with the third, "like a man," and the fourth, "like a flying eagle." We doubt if much can be judiciously made of this, although it does seem worthy of mention how congruous and harmonious are the several features of the vision in each case as so viewed.

4. The significance of the symbol seen in the figure of **the horse that was red** appears in the words that follow.—**And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth.** The Alexandrine manuscript reads, "the peace of the earth," but there seems no occasion for changing the phraseology of our Common Version as it stands, save that the word "power" need not be supplied. We may read, simply, "and it was given him to take peace from the earth."—**And that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.** Here arises, first of all, the question whether the *war* evidently signified is war in the ordinary sense. Elliott, in "*Horæ Apocalypticæ*," so takes it. The visions seen under these first four seals he regards as representing successive conditions of the Roman Empire; the first, that prosperous one which began with the reign of Nerva, following upon the death of Domitian, and embracing the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, and Adrian, a period of eighty-four years, from A. D. 96 to A. D. 180; a period spoken of by Gibbon, whom Elliott quotes, as "that during which the condition of the human race was more happy and prosperous than in any other like period, in the whole history of the world." This language we believe to be extravagant, however well it may serve the purpose of Elliott in his effort to sustain his own peculiar theory of interpretation. The second seal, with the red horse, is regarded as representing the period of civil war, following the death of Adrian. The other seals are explained in accordance with the same theory of interpretation. Stuart, consistently with his fundamental theory as to the date of the Apoca-

lypse, in the time of Nero, and antedating the destruction of Jerusalem, while he makes the white horse with his rider significant of the triumphs of Christianity in its first promulgation, views the remaining three seals as denoting the destruction of the Jewish persecuting power, the ravaging of Judea by the invading Romans, the final overthrow of Judaism itself, and the destruction of the holy city. If there were no other difficulties here, the impossibility we have found in the adoption of Stuart's date for the writing of the Apocalypse, puts this interpretation out of the question. But is not the view of Stuart, as well as that of Elliott—and the latter especially so—inconsistent with what must be regarded as the general meaning and scope of all these visions? Surely, it cannot have been the sole purpose of Apocalyptic disclosures so impressive and wonderful in all the attending conditions—uniting in the symbolism employed such magnificant theophanies, with accompanying representative ministries of the universe—earth and heaven, the redeemed church and the sentient creation,—it cannot be that all this array is marshaled for any less a purpose than to set forth in the revelation given that which concerns, not a part of the human race, nor the secular history, merely, of even so vast and potent a power as the Roman Empire, but what shall be worthy alike of the scenery and the drama. Neither can we believe that the destruction of the Jewish State, though viewed as a power hostile to Christianity, assailing with persecution and outrage the kingdom of God in its New Dispensation, is all that must here be intended. The Jewish persecutions were not, in themselves or in their effect, such as to explain adequately the import of these visions. What either Elliott or Stuart adopts as a complete interpretation, may be accepted if taken as partial, and *as included under* what is of far wider scope and vastly more comprehensive. For example, there seems no good reason why the symbolism of the red horse and his formidable rider should not be in a degree *retrospective.* That of the white horse certainly is so, if, as seems agreed, it be viewed as denoting the triumphant progress of the gospel during the apostolic period. The vision in this part of it is retrospective, even if Stuart's date, and his theory of interpretation, be adopted. Why should not that seen under the second seal be equally so? Then, alike the persecuting hostility of the Jews and the fearful visitations upon them in the war that "took away their state and nation," with the unspeakable attending miseries, and that outbreak of pagan hostility, with its own internecine strifes, seen in the conflicts of the Roman power with the spiritual kingdom that had come forward to dispute its supremacy—both these may be regarded as *included under* the general Apocalyptic view presented in the symbol of the red horse. It is said that to his rider "it was given to take peace from the earth." Our Lord's words, "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword," are here eminently applicable. The symbolism of the rider upon the red horse may be taken as denoting the fulfillment of what those weighty words import. We see no reason why the significance of the symbol should be limited to either the Jewish or the pagan persecutions and wars. It comprehends the whole idea of that conflict between the world-power and the kingdom of Christ among men, with the destructive attendant wars amongst the nations themselves, more or less involving that higher and more momentous struggle, or else involved in it. Viewing this whole mighty struggle as taking place under the superintending providence of God, and all its issues shaped in accordance with his own purposes of mercy or of judgment, we perceive in the rider on the red horse just the symbol of a great fact, then a prophecy, now a history. Durham, the Scottish divine of the seventeenth century, from whom we quote above, makes the significance of the second seal relate to the first pagan persecutions under Nero and Domitian. Of those of Nero, it should be noticed that they never extended beyond the city of Rome; while those of even Domitian, whose acts of beastly violence were more of a domestic than a general nature, and whose recorded cruelties toward the Christians are not numerous, however mean and wicked they may have been, were hardly such as to justify the application to them of this symbolism as finding its complete fulfillment in them. We prefer to take it as denoting, in general, the outbreak of that war between the two great forces, thenceforth during

5 And when he had opened the third seal, [a]I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo [b]a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and [c]*see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come[1]. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a
6 balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A [2]measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

a ch. 4: 7....b Zech. 6: 2....c ch. 9: 4.——1 Some ancient authorities read, *and see*....2 Or, *A chœnix* (i. e., about a quart) *of wheat for a shilling*—implying great scarcity.

many ages to contest the dominion of this world, and whose vicissitudes are so much the subject of the entire book.

5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse. Interpreters, for the most part, appear to agree that the third seal represents, under its symbolism, *famine*, as the second had denoted *war*. We may accept this as in general correct.—**And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.** The balances are supposed to denote that careful economy in the dispensation and use of the necessaries of life which the prevalence of famine makes necessary.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say. The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts read: "I heard *as it were* a voice." Accordingly, the latest revision reads, at this place: "And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying." The uncertainty implied in "as it were" (ὡς), Alford thinks, and rightly, "must be taken with the whole clause, as applying to the *situation*, not to its being a voice, which it *was*." The voice seemed to come from the point indicated—"the midst of the four living creatures"; but it must have been a real voice, and must have seemed to be such, since the words were so distinctly uttered and understood. Shall we take the statement that the voice comes "from the midst of the four living creatures," as significant? These represent the sentient creation. Famine is an affliction originating in certain material conditions, and felt especially as a physical calamity. *By whom* the voice is uttered cannot be explained; only the significance of its *locality*, as just intimated, is to be inferred from what is said.—**A measure of wheat for a penny; and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.** The revision, it will be noticed, makes this passage read: "A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not." The "denarius," or penny, among the Romans, was worth about eight pence half-penny in English coin, or from fourteen to eighteen cents in our own. It is said to have been the amount of a soldier's daily pay, in the time of Tiberius; also that of a day-laborer. The "chœnix," translated "measure," is said by Stuart, to have been nearly equal to our English quart. He shows, too, by reference to various classical writers, that this measure "was the ordinary daily allowance for the sustenance of a man." The usual price of a chœnix of wheat was one-eighth of a "penny," or denarius. Of course, the price named in the text, being eight times this, indicates great scarcity, and may have implied, besides, that the wages of a day-laborer would, in the deficiency of food supposed, barely procure his own personal sustenance, leaving nothing for the support of his family, if he had one. He would, therefore, be driven to the much inferior food supplied by the cheaper grain, barley, which however could, itself, be bought only at the large price of three measures for a "penny," or denarius. The symbolism, accordingly, is not that of actual destitution; but of great scarcity, making the necessaries of life exorbitantly dear, so that the barest subsistence would be difficult and precarious. The concluding words of the verse seem to imply, that the scarcity described should not affect the oil and the wine. These, if abundant in a time when the common articles of food were scarce, would greatly relieve the stress of the famine; olive oil being very nutritious, and the simple wine of the country adapted also to afford relief in the stress of hunger, and the consequent suffering. They could also be preserved for almost any length of time, and so might, in the symbol, represent *provision against* destitution, calamity, and suffering.

So far the exposition is, perhaps, not diffi-

cult. When we come, however, to search for the Apocalyptic significance of the symbols employed, the clue is hard to find. Some writers upon the passage seem to drop the symbolism, almost entirely, and to take the representation as that of actual and literal famine; differing chiefly as to the questions *when* and *where;* Stuart, making the allusion to be to the destitution and distress, amounting in the end to absolute starvation, suffered by the Jews under the Roman invasion, and especially in the taking of Jerusalem; Alford understanding the passage as a prediction that "famine, the pressure of want on men. . . . will be one of the four judgments by which the way of the Lord's coming will be opened"; while Elliott views the prediction as foretelling the scarcity and distress visited upon various parts of the empire, as results of almost constant wars. Some suppose a reference to specific seasons of such scarcity as that in the time of Claudius, or that under the reign of Septimius Severus. Others, taking the symbols in their proper character as such, interpret them variously. Thus Cornelius â Lapide supposes them to refer to the prevalence of heresy, especially Arianism; Vitringa to scarcity of spiritual provision, as from the time of Constantine till the ninth century. Beda imagines the black horse as denoting "the crowd of false brethren, who hold the balance of a right profession, but cause grief by their practice of the works of darkness." Durham says: "This type holdeth forth a hard condition the church should be under, and a sad dispensation she should meet with, which, though moderated in a more orderly way than the former, yet should exceedingly mar the beauty of the church, and bring her low, so that she who before was white and lively, afterward red and wounded, should now (as it were), drawing near expiring, fainting and swooning, as one who hath shed blood, turn black and pale; which, in general, holdeth forth a growing strait of the church, drawing nearer unto death than the former."

"In the multitude of counselors there is"—in this case, perplexity. Possibly a clue to the difficulty may be found in what we have already named as apparently indicated by the symbols of the white horse and the red horse. In the former, with his victorious rider, we have seen the gospel triumphs attending the opening of the dispensation, when, with such extraordinary rapidity "the word of God grew and multiplied," to the utmost borders of the Roman Empire. In the latter, appears the fulfillment of that prophetic saying of the Lord, "I came not to send peace, but a sword"; seen in especially the opening stages of the long conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Consistently with this, ought we not to view what appears under the third seal as exhibiting, in a like general way, some other aspect of the same kingdom of God in the vicissitudes of its long career? If we take the Christian history in general, we observe (1) as already pointed out, a period of extraordinary triumph; (2), the breaking out of that spirit of violent hostility, in which the great conflict of error with truth, unrighteousness with righteousness, the kingdom of Satan with the kingdom of God, began to assume the form of systematic endeavor to "wear out the saints of the Most High"; (3) following this *within the church itself* the first appearances of an evil which was more or less to characterize its subsequent history—perversion of the truth of God, in forms of pernicious false teaching, with denial to Christian people of the privilege of access to the word of God, and so to the sources and means of Christian knowledge. In Apocalyptic visions setting forth in expressive symbol the future of that kingdom of God whose opening era was so glorious, it is impossible that a fact so signal and so momentous as this last should fail of due representation. And the symbols employed we should expect to find in keeping with those used to set forth other phases of the long and troubled history. Now *famine* is the frequent, more or less the inevitable, consequent of war. Men are withdrawn from the needful duty of cultivating the earth, and are set to killing one another. Means of subsistence are consumed by armies, destroyed by invading forces, or otherwise turned from their proper use, or wastefully ravaged. Where wars are long continued, general distress follows as a result necessary and inevitable. It is readily seen, then, how appropriately in these successive visions the red horse and his rider, as the symbol of war, is followed by the black horse and his ominous rider, as the symbol of famine. But we have declined to see in the former *literal* war, whether specific

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, [a] I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
8 [b]And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, [c]to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, [d]and with the beasts of the earth.

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come.[1]
8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with [2]death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

a ch. 4: 7.....b Zech. 6: 3....c Ezek. 14: 21 ...d Lev. 26: 22.—1 Some ancient authorities add, *and see*....2 Or, *pestilence*.

wars or war in general. Such as these are rather implied in, included under, that higher and wider significance of the vision which makes this great conflict a spiritual one, *involving* those of a more literal kind in which, so often, religious animosities have played a great part. Must we not view the famine that accompanies or follows after in a similar way? Can we locate, or make specific the famine represented here? Might not the symbolism apply to any one of the many seasons of scarcity and distress mentioned in modern history? And to any of them quite as well as to any other? Or, if we group them all in one general representation, as Alford seems to do, in what sense can famine be said, as in his theory of exposition, to serve as one of the "preparations" for "the Lord's coming"?

Upon the whole, while it might be rash to name any exposition of this verse as undoubtedly the correct one, we incline to view it as setting forth under the figure of material scarcity, indicated in its special characteristics with extraordinary vividness through the special symbols employed, and under imagery which was often to be in human experience literal and historical, that momentous fact in the spiritual history of mankind under even the Gospel Dispensation—the prevalence of false teaching, apostasy from the truth, changing of the very word of God into a lie, together with denial, by usurped authorities, to Christian souls of the very bread of life. During the centuries of Christian history, the word of God has never wholly failed, although the spiritual hunger of those from whom the divine sustenance was thus withholden has often been extreme; while in the midst of all, the oil and the wine of God's supporting grace have remained "unhurt." Perhaps this exposition ought to be rather suggested than positively proposed and maintained. We find it, for our own part, more in keeping with the general Apocalyptic order in connection with these first four seals, and less open to objection than any one of the many other interpretations named.

7, 8. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse. Again, the summoning word is, "Come." The word (χλωρός) translated "pale," may also be rendered "livid"; "the color," says Alford, "of the corpse in incipient decay, or of the complexion extremely pale through disease."—**And his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.** The English and American revisers read: "And he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him." The word in the Greek, which the common version translates "hell," is not the word properly so translated, *gehenna*, but that which denotes in general the world of the departed, *Hades*.—**And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.** The preposition changes in the last clause, and we should read, "by the beasts (properly '*wild beasts*') of the earth." The representation is a most vivid one of *slaughter*, a destruction of human life by every variety of means. What seems to be intended is, distinctively, murderous persecution. The mention of "the fourth part of the earth" can only be meant as indicating in general how numerous were to be the victims of this wide-wasting slaughter. The specification of various instruments of destruction implies how expedients to this end should be exhausted in the cruel work of persecution. Thus is presented the fourth great general fact in early Christian history. We have, as before, (1) the opening triumph, (2) the outburst of violent hostility, (3) the corruption of Christian teaching, and the cutting off of spiritual sustenance from hungry souls, (4) *persecution*, in its distinctive and specially murderous

form. In this worst form, too, it follows historically upon the several stages before indicated, and so is appropriately represented under the symbol of the fourth rider. If we study this symbol with care, we shall realize with what vivid truthfulness it sets forth what might seem almost incredible as a fact of history—the myriads of lives which by every manner of cruel death perished in the successive persecutions, of which those under the Roman emperors were the example and the type. This was true especially of the later emperors. "It would have been an easy task," says Gibbon, "from the history of Eusebius, from the declaration of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of disgustful pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks and red-hot beds, and with the variety of tortures which fire and steel, *savage beasts*, and more savage executioners, could inflict on the human body"—and we may add that these "disgustful pictures" are far less creations of the imagination or exaggerations of fact, than Gibbon in so many places hints or implies.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It is quite evident that the first four seals have a distinctive character, and stand apart, for purposes of exposition, from the three that follow. Their symbolism, while differing from that of those which come after, is similar in character in all four, the horse and rider appearing in each. There is a general connection among all the seals, yet the grouping in four and three is clearly manifest.

When we come to the opening of the fifth and sixth seals, we shall find reasons for certain limitations of the events foreshadowed in the first four seals, to a particular period of time. And still, this limitation is not absolute. While these seals especially apply to the period to be indicated directly, in a wider sense they cover the whole temporal range of the progress of the gospel, and of the conflict ushered in by the rider on the red horse; ending only at the end of all things. Thus, under the first seal we have the Gospel Dispensation in its glorious opening, yet in this opening stage its whole career foreshadowed; under the second, the beginning, the introduction of that fulfillment of our Lord's warning prophecy, which, indeed, was to fill many centuries of time, yet here appearing rather as introduced, than as carried on to its consummation; under the third and fourth, in like manner, beginnings and early stages of development are principally intended, yet by no means exclusively. Applications of the symbolism of these seals may easily be found along the track of history during many centuries of time, and possibly may continue so down to the end. We trace, however, a certain historical order in the visions as they successively appear, and this should not be disregarded in the exposition. We may, it is believed, locate the more immediate application of what appears under the first four seals, within the period of the Roman Empire; the fearfully vivid symbolism of the fourth and last finding its especial counterpart in the ferocious persecutions under Galerius, Diocletian, and Maximin, where we see included with other forms of death inflicted, that favorite one, "by the beasts of the earth"—the bloody spectacle of the amphitheatre, when "*Ad leonem!*"—"To the lion!"—was a common word of doom for those who could more easily die than be untrue.

We anticipate the difficulty which readers may find in our interpretation of the third seal. Perhaps more account should be made, than appears in our exposition, of the literal and actual in this striking picture of distressful famine. The literal underlies the figurative, in all these representations; just as we see it in history, the spiritual is in close association with the temporal and material; the church is in the wilderness; the kingdom of God is, in its apparent fortunes, more or less involved with the kingdoms of the world; destructive wars between world-powers, comprehend among their issues those of the world-powers themselves with the advancing reign of the King of kings; while "distress of nations" through famine and pestilence serves as typical of that worse destitution and ravage, when sin reigns and devours like a pestilence, and the people perish for lack of knowledge. *How much* of this higher spiritual element ought to be traced in the symbols of these visions, we are not prepared to say; that it *is there*, we are persuaded. Ellicott's Commentary fully recognizes this, when, in speaking of war as symbolized by the red horse,

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under [a]the altar [b]the souls of them that were slain [c]for the word of God, and for [d]the testimony which they held:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they

a ch. 8:3; 9:13; 14:18....b ch. 20:4....c ch. 1:9....d 2 Tim. 1:8; ch. 12:17; 19:10.

and famine by the black horse, following in his steps, it says: "There is a similar experience in the history of the Church. The red horse of controversy is followed by the black horse of spiritual starvation. In the heat of polemical pride and passion for theological conquest, is developed that love of barren dogmatics which forgets the milk of the word and the bread of life, which are the needed food of souls."

The fact must be kept in view that those which appear under the imagery of the first four seals, are events occurring in the superintending and overruling providence of God; they are "parts of his ways" in carrying forward to their consummation his purposes as respects alike the church and the world. Each rider goes forth with his mission and his office. To him on the red horse it is "*given*" to "take peace from the earth," and to him is "*given*" a sharp sword. A like subordination of office is implied for the rider upon the black horse, as the charge is given him to moderate the stress of the destitution he inflicts, and to leave still available for those who suffer it, the oil and the wine of divine consolation. To the rider on the pale horse, and to his terrible attendants there was "*given* power over the fourth part of the earth to kill" and destroy. These things took place, not as a revolt, for the time irresistible, against the sovereignty of him that sat upon the throne, and of the Lamb, but as so permitted and used as to become divine dispensations, carrying on to fulfillment great purposes of grace and of power.

9-11. THE FIFTH SEAL.

9. THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR.—**And when he had opened the fifth seal.** The first four seals, we have seen, are closely related in character and significance. The remaining three are, in the form of the representation under each, distinct not only from the four preceding ones, but also from each other. There is, however, as will appear, a general connection among all the seven, with a corresponding resultant unity of general intention.—**I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.** It is important that the *symbolical* character of the whole representation, here, be kept clearly in mind. This symbolism must be forgotten or overlooked by those who find a difficulty in the description of these souls of the martyrs—their departed spirits—as, instead of being in heaven and in glory with their Lord, lying under the altar, and, as if still in suffering, calling for vindication, and for the punishment of their murderers. It is not at all the purpose of the vision to represent this as the *actual* condition of the martyred dead, any more than it is to represent God as *actually* seated upon the throne as here seen, or as surrounded by the encircling elders with all the other groupings of the theophany. It is all *vision*, not *reality*, and vision intended to set forth *ideas*, *principles*, and general facts of divine dispensation, rather than specific and literal events. The leading general fact of this kind, presented under the fifth seal, is that of God's apparent delay in vindicating the truth of his own word, and requiting the cruelties visited upon his people by their enemies and his. With a view to set forth this general idea, or fact, a vision is presented of spirits of the martyred dead, who serve to this end an office like that which is filled by the characters of a drama. It should be remembered, in further exposition of the vision, that John is still standing by the sea of glass, and what has been described in chs. iv., v., is still before him. A new object, however, now appears—an altar. It is the altar (θυσιαστηρίον) of sacrifice, of burnt-offerings, and we have in the connection again the word translated, "that were slain" (ἐσφαγμένων), which means slain in sacrifice. This word is used of the "Lamb as it had been slain," and as applied here to the martyrs indicates that they had, indeed, drank of his cup, and been baptized with his baptism. They had experienced "the fellowship of his sufferings." "Under the altar," must mean at the foot of the altar; as was the case in ancient temple sacrifice, when the bodies

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, [a] How long, O Lord, [b] holy and true, [c] dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?
11 And [d] white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, [e] that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

10 held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on
11 the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled *their course*.

a See Zech. 1:12....*b* ch. 3:7....*c* ch. 11:18; 19:2.....*d* ch. 3:4, 5; 7:9, 14....*e* Heb. 11:40; ch. 14:13.——1 Some ancient authorities read, *be fulfilled* in number.

of the victims offered lay near and around the altar upon which they had been sacrificed. These martyrs had been slain "for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held"—that is, on account of (διὰ) the word of God to which, in their testimony, they had been faithful unto death.

10. And they cried with a loud [a "*great*"] **voice.** As indicated above, it is not to be inferred that the spirits of the martyrs in their glorified and heavenly state do actually thus invoke divine judgment upon their oppressors. Those seen in the vision are representative forms, simply, and are used to set forth in a dramatic way, consistent with the method of the whole book, the idea of that divine judgment upon oppressors and murderers which in the divine providence seems often so strangely delayed.—**How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?** The word translated "Lord," "Master" (δεσπότης), correlates with "servant" (δοῦλος). The revisers accordingly translate more correctly, "How long, O Master"; the appeal being by those who have faithfully served and suffered, to him in whose service and cause they have done and endured all. "Dost thou not judge," implies an appeal to the divine justice. And this makes more clear the word "avenge," which does not mean vengeance in any vindictive sense, but in the sense of that deserved requital with which justice visits the wicked and the cruel.

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them. More correctly translated, "*And there was given to each one a white robe.*" Again to be taken in the strictly symbolical sense. The "white robes" indicate divine recognition and vindication, against every manner of accusation and contumely endured by them in their earthly life. We are not to infer that those who are faithful unto death are not at once thus "clothed upon"; but in the dramatic action of this vision, the spirits of the martyrs representatively appear as in this way acknowledged and rewarded in the presence of the beholding universe. The *general fact* thus presented is that God does not forget his faithful ones, nor is he indifferent to all they have done and endured, however his judgments upon their oppressors and murderers may seem to linger. We may note here that an affirmative answer to the question is distinctly implied by the Greek negative used, "not" (οὐ)—"dost thou *not*"?—**And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season.** Alford objects to the exposition, "abstain trom their cry for vengeance, be quiet," which De Wette and others prefer. He thinks we should understand "rest in blessedness." But in that case, how shall we explain the phrase, "a little season"—a little time—as also the word "until"? Will they rest in blessedness *only* "a little while"? The force of the word "rest," which means also to "cease," "rest in quiet," bears evidently upon what has preceded in describing the appeal for justice of these souls of the martyrs. What is said to them is, in effect, that in "a little season" their prayer shall be granted; till then, let them rest and wait. The general thought is the same as that in the Lord's parable, "Shall not God avenge his own elect . . . though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them *speedily*." God's "little while" may not seem such to us. It may comprehend centuries. Yet, what are centuries to his eternity?—**Until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.** The language evidently implies that these souls under the altar represent only *a portion* of those who in successive ages suffer death as witnesses for God and his truth. Others are yet to "be killed as they were," and meanwhile, that final judgment of God in

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, [a]and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and [b]the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

12 And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon be-

a ch. 16: 18....b Joel 2: 10, 31; 3: 15; Matt. 24: 29; Acts 2: 20.

which alike the truth and its witnesses will have triumphant vindication, is delayed.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It is important that we should emphasize here the significant teaching of the words noticed in the conclusion of our exposition, above. We understand by these souls under the altar—these spirits of martyrs—representatives of those who had given their lives in testimony of the truth as it is in Jesus, *within a certain period.* It is clear that others were to suffer after them. We know of no warrant for claiming that these who "should be killed as they were," are victims of some outbreak of long extinct persecution just preceding the coming of the Lord. To thus interpret is to find in the passage what the writer of it cannot have intended to put there. The natural meaning of it is that these souls under the altar, are, representatively, spirits of those who had suffered in connection with what had just previously been indicated at the opening of the second, third, and fourth seals; and especially the last. Thus while the vision changes its special character as the fifth seal is opened, the general connection of the whole is maintained. We therefore consider ourselves justified in viewing these souls under the altar, while implying a general allusion to victims of persecution in all ages, as representative especially of such as had perished under *pagan* persecutions; and that these "fellow-servants" and "brethren" who were yet to be killed, were such as should in like manner suffer at the yet bloodier hand of the Man of Sin, "in his time" to be "revealed."

12-17. THE SIXTH SEAL, AND THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE.

12. And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. The revision omits "lo," following the Sinaitic manuscript, and reads "the whole moon," in accordance with the Sinaitic and Alexandrine. It is quite customary with interpreters to treat this, with the verses following to the end of the chapter, as a description of the end of the world. We decline to take this view, for these reasons: (1) That it so much overlooks the fact that what appears here, as elsewhere in the book, is *vision*, and vision in which the objects and incidents presented are not actual and literal, but images and symbols. Those who interpret the passage as descriptive of what is actually to occur at the end of all things, drop this symbolical element almost altogether, and read the whole as if it were literal history. (2) It is making the whole Apocalyptic scheme a scene of confusion to introduce at this point, and at so many subsequent ones, the end of the world and the last judgment. Lange would have it that the order of representation in the book is cyclical; the same scene re-appearing under different aspects, and ending always in the final universal cataclysm. It seems to be taken for granted, in a hasty and unauthorized way, that, where the description is of a nature to suggest that ultimate event in human history, it is, of course, to be taken as having that meaning. (3) The language, here, is precisely in keeping with what we find in Old Testament prophecy, as predictive of national events, great and startling changes in the political world. We may take, as an example, Joel 2: 10, where invasion of the land of Judah is threatened: "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." Or Jer. 4: 23, 24, 28: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black." More to the point of our present passage is "the burden of Babylon," in Isa. 13: 9, 10: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and with fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For

13 [a]And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
14 [b]And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and [c]every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, [d]hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

13 came as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell into the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when
14 she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the [1]chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the

a ch. 8: 10; 9: 1....*b* Ps. 102. 26; Isa. 34: 4; Heb. 1: 12, 13....*c* Jer. 3: 23; 4: 24; ch. 16: 20....*d* Isa. 2: 19.—1 Or, *military tribunes*. Gr. *chiliarchs*.

the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light, the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." No one, surely, will understand by these passages in Old Testament prophecy, more than predictions, under this vivid imagery, of events whose record is now in history, and whose tremendous catastrophes fully justify a representation which makes them to be *as if* nature itself were plunging into the original chaos. (4) The common interpretation, here, is open to the same objection as lies against so much of the labored and involved expositions of this book. It assumes an amount of elaboration and complication in the Apocalyptic scheme itself which is neither necessary to it, nor likely to be in it. Why should we suppose that at this point, while so much remains to be unfolded of the contents of the sealed book, we are thus suddenly and unexpectedly brought to the consummation of all things—to return, at the opening of the next chapter, to the beginning of the Gospel Dispensation once more, and be brought again to the end of all things in the tenth and eleventh chapters; returning again to the point of departure with the opening of the twelfth? There is a far more natural and simple method of procedure in the interpretation, which may afford less opportunity for elaborate and ingenious theorizing, yet is much more likely to be according to the real meaning of the book.

We prefer, for these reasons, to take the descriptive imagery of the passage now under consideration, as in analogy with those above quoted from the Old Testament. At the opening of the sixth seal the scene changes. John sees before him—in vision—what seems like a grand cataclysm of all things. Those terrific phenomena of nature which most oppress human beings with consternation and dread, seem to pass before his eyes, with others, unexampled and amazing, while fear seizes upon all the beholders, who see in these terror-striking portents signs of divine wrath and judgment. Doubtless, it can be only great and awful events which may appropriately be represented under such imagery; revolutions wide-reaching and overwhelming, a downfall of earthly powers and dignities as great as the imagination is capable of conceiving. Yet such events have transpired in history; and such we believe to be indicated here.—**And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.** The Alexandrine manuscript reads, "stars of God." There is, however, no occasion for change. We are not to take sun, moon, and stars, as symbols of earthly dignities. The scene as a whole is symbolical, and to be interpreted in the general way intimated above.—**And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.** "Rolled up" is a better rendering. The description is an exceedingly vivid one of what would appear to a beholder, so placed as to see before him the earth and the enveloping sky, with the orbs that roll in space, seemingly all rushing to destruction, and mingled in a common ruin. Under this tremendous imagery are Apocalyptically set forth events in divine providence, in which God's judgments upon ungodly and cruel men, as nations and as individuals, are seen in operation.

15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. The translation in the revision is better: "And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains [marg. *military tribunes*], and the rich,

16 [a]And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
17 [b]For the great day of his wrath is come; [c]and who shall be able to stand?

16 caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the
17 throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

a Hos. 10: 8; Luke 23: 30; ch. 9: 6....b Isa. 13: 6, etc; Zeph. 1: 14, etc.; ch. 16: 14....c Ps. 76: 7.

and the strong, and every bondman and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains." It is a description of the general consternation that mankind, in all classes and conditions, are wont to feel, even in the midst of great political convulsions, with consequent disorder, social chaos, and personal suffering—"the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. We are to keep in mind in what presence John is still standing, while this scene passes before his eyes. The centre of the whole mighty vision is the Throne, with the resplendent form there seated, and the Lamb with the sealed book. The affrighted nations, their kings and their chief captains, appear in the vision as if conscious of that presence, and of the judicial character of the visitation so frightful to them.

17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? An important difference of reading occurs here. The Sinaitic manuscript has "of their (*αὐτῶν*) wrath." This reading the revision adopts. As the words stand in the common version, it is only the wrath of the Lamb that is the subject of mention in the last verse. The changed reading is probably the preferable one, meaning the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We are quite willing, now, to concede that if this remarkable passage be taken to indicate political convulsions and revolutions only, and not, as so many writers have assumed, the end of all things at the last judgment, only political changes of the most extraordinary nature could adequately meet the conditions of an interpretation so grounded. But it seems to us that these conditions are fully met in what has transpired at different times in the world's history, and by no means least of all in that remarkable event, implying so much in itself, and carrying with it such tremendous consequences—the fall of the Roman Empire. It was an event of the greatest moment in the general history of the kingdom of God among men. It was the final passing away of the ancient order; the old world therein perished, and out of the chaos a new world was born. Modern Christian civilization, to say nothing of the progress of the gospel, and the developments and achievements of Christianity itself, became possible alone in the passing away of a political system so identified with the old idolatries and all that was most characteristic of heathen civilization. But in itself it was a wonderful event, well deserving a prominent representation upon the vast Apocalyptic scene; while the convulsions, the destructive wars, the exhibitions of human violence, the downfall of thrones and dignities, the wide-spread miseries, the general chaos accompanying it, make appropriate for a prophetic delineation of it, even such imagery as appears in the verse just considered.

It will be seen, therefore, that we assign the events foreshadowed in this sixth chapter, so far as limitation of the kind is implied, to the period of the Roman Empire. We do not understand specific events, or individual persons, or even any exact period of time to be indicated; but only, in general, those events and changes which characterized the centuries during which Christianity was beginning its long career, and Paganism, with the power that was its main support, first resisted, then persecuted, but finally itself perished.

CHAPTER VII.

AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, [a] holding the four winds of the earth, [b] that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on

a Dan. 7: 2....b ch. 9: 4.

SEALING OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

1-3. The Angels of the Winds.

1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth. The better reading is: "After this (*μετὰ τοῦτο*) I saw," etc. The principle of interpretation which we have thus far recognized, must still be observed, viz.: that the symbolical figures introduced in visions such as these, are to be treated *as* symbolical and representative. Various theories proposed for identifying the four angels here mentioned are, for this reason, not only unnecessary, but misleading. Needless and hurtful complication has been introduced at many points in this book, by assuming as included in what is said so much more than belongs to the simple and natural sense of the words. John is not looking, here, upon actual events and personages, but upon figures and scenes in a vision, under which providential procedures, principles of divine administration, great general facts and truths, are set forth. We, therefore, with Lange, view these four angels as "symbolical angel forms"; not "bad angels," as Calovius, nor "angels of nature," as De Wette, nor "four world-kingdoms," as Bede—viz.: the four kingdoms of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome —nor "angels of the winds," in any other than a purely figurative sense. They represent here in their action the idea of providential delay in the final execution of judgment. Hengstenberg indicates numerous passages in the Old Testament, where "winds" are used as symbols of such judgment. One of these is in Jer. 49: 36: "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds." Another is Dan. 7: 2: "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." So in Ezekiel 1: 4, "a whirlwind out of the north" symbolizes "the judgment that was to break in upon Judea out of Babylon." The same general thought is in our present passage; only the judgment implied is not local and limited, but comprehensive of the whole world. It is the four winds of the earth, held in check by angels standing "on the four corners of the earth"; under which imagery is contained the idea of *universality*, so far as the world of men is concerned.—**Holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.** The word for "holding"—holding the four winds of the earth"—(*κρατοῦντας*, not *ἔχοντας*), means to hold in the sense of *restraining, controlling*. There can be no good reason for *individualizing* or carrying into detail the symbolism, here, as is done by Hengstenberg. By the sea he understands "the sea of nations"; the trees "correspond to the kings, magnates, etc., in ch. 6: 15"; trees and grass "denote the high and the low, princes and subjects." It is by taking every allusion of this kind as embodying thus some distinct symbolism that so much complication and unnecessary difficulty are introduced in the interpretation of the book. It is sufficient for us to view the scene *as a whole* as thus symbolical. The winds denote in a general way judgment in providential visitation, of every variety and kind; while consistently with this, and in a like use of natural forces and incidents to represent the whole idea of such visitation as reaching to men and nations, and of the kind so often mentioned in history, the world of nature is used to represent the *object* of the visitation. Providential interposition, however, delays the execution. The angels hold the four winds, "that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." This they do by divine command. Associating the passage here with the closing verses of ch. vi., the connection is clear. In those verses the world of men is seen filled with consternation, and as if expecting the end of all things, in a final, overwhelming destruction. It seems to them that "the great day" of "the wrath of the Lamb "has come. But that great day has *not* yet come.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
3 Saying [a] Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have [b] sealed the servants of our God [c] in their foreheads.

2 the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth
3 and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the ser-

a ch. 6:6; 9:4.....*b* Ezek. 9:4; ch. 14:1....*c* ch. 22:4.

The purposes of God toward his church and toward the world have by no means as yet been accomplished. "The mystery of God" is not yet "finished." Hence this picture of an interposing providence, giving command to those charged with the execution of his judgments upon a wicked world, to hold the four winds of his destroying visitation, "that the wind should not blow upon the earth," and so "make a full end" at once. The reason of this appears in what follows.

2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east. Again it is simply a representative angel form, not to be taken as Gabriel, nor as the Lord Jesus, nor as the Holy Spirit, nor any otherwise than in the same representative way as the four angels previously mentioned. The better translation is, "I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising." Ellicott's note, here, is equally just and beautiful: "The angels appear as carrying out the purposes of God. This angel rises into view from the door of the dawn. In the midst of dark symptoms of coming storm and judgment there springs up a light for the righteous, and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted; they need not be afraid of evil tidings whose hearts stand fast believing in the Lord."—**Having the seal of the living God.** The illustrative passage, here, is 2 Tim. 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his." Again, in Eph. 1:13, 14, we read, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—**And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.** Here again the four angels appear as executioners of divine judgment, yet restrained by the power and command of him who assigns them their office.

3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees. As before, natural forces and natural objects are used as representative of the whole idea of divine visitation in providential judgments. — **Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.** The word "our" should here be supplied, and we should read, "the servants of our God." Also we should read, "upon" (ἐπί) their foreheads. The word "seal," as used in this verse, does not, of course, denote the idea of fastening together, as the word is often used at present, but is rather employed in the older English sense of making a mark by means of a signet. This is the ordinary meaning of the word "seal," as found in the New Testament. The symbolism in this place is carried out perfectly. The destruction threatened is of that *indiscriminate* kind which we see where the powers of nature come forth, armed and terrible, as ministers of divine punishment. But there are those whom God will make safe, when the storm comes. That they may be known amidst the multitudes of men, they are chosen forth, and each receives the seal of God upon his forehead. In the interpretation of this symbolism, we come upon that simple yet cardinal truth set forth in the passages quoted above, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." He seals them "with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance." In other words, the promised Holy Spirit works within them that regenerating change which sets them apart as the children of God; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Until the multitude of these shall have been gathered out of the world, in its ages and generations of time, final judgment is withholden. "The great day" of the Lamb's wrath comes not until then, however in the special judgments visited upon the world, the nations in their terror and confusion may, at times, imagine that they see its portents already thundering and gleaming over them. This general truth, in the dispensations of God toward his people and toward the world—this, and this only—we

4 [a]And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed [b]a hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.
5 Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand.
6 Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand.
7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.
8 Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

4 vants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.
5 Of the tribe of Judah *were* sealed twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand:
6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand:
7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand:
8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand:
Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

a ch. 9:16....*b* ch. 14:1.

conceive to be set forth in the passage here studied. Under the imagery of the seal upon the forehead is contained the thought that the work of grace wrought within by the Spirit is of a nature to be known outwardly in "a well-ordered life and a godly conversation."

4-8. The Number of the Seals.

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed; and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. We reserve for the General Comments some notice of the significance of this representation of the sealed by the names of the tribes. What is to be understood by the numbers given is also noticed further on.—**Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand, etc.** Ellicott very properly rejects the view of those who understand those thus sealed to be Jewish Christians. He says: "The time of judgment and trial is drawing near; we have seen the tokens of the coming storm in the opening of the sixth seal; our wish is to know the lot of the saints of God. This chapter answers this wish; they are safe, having the seal of God. Now to limit the answer to Israelitish Christians is to break in abruptly upon the general flow of thought with a bald literalism. The sealed ones are explained to be the servants of God; the description which follows proclaims them to be the Israel of God." As we observe more closely the enumeration of the tribes, some peculiarities in the names given, and the order in which they stand, should be noticed: (1) Reuben no longer leads the roll, and Judah takes his place. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," was said to him, by the dying father and patriarch. (Gen. 49:4). To Judah it was said: "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise . . . unto him shall the gathering of the people be." In accordance with this, Judah here heads the roll of the tribes. (2) The tribe of Dan is not named at all. This consists with the fact that the tribe of Dan became in due time wholly extinct; having first lapsed into heathenism and immorality. Among *this* "twelve," also, there was a faithless one, who, like Judas, went "to his own place." In each instance is a warning against unfaithfulness. "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." A spiritual ancestry is no security against the consequences of spiritual apostasy. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (3) Neither does the name of Ephraim appear, apparently for a like reason—that of Joseph taking its place. The number twelve is thus preserved, while the lessons of tribal history are marked and emphasized. The number of "twelve thousand," sealed from each of the tribes, with the hundred and forty-four thousand which appears in the sum, while not of course to be taken literally, is significant. "Twelve," says Carpenter in Ellicott, "is used as the number of those who in every age have been called out to witness for some truth which the world needed." Such were the twelve tribes; such, again, were the twelve apostles. "The number twelve, then, stands for a world-witness of divine truth; and the fruit of this world-witness is a wide and sustained success; the twelve multiplied by the twelve a thousandfold. . . . The skeleton organization is twelve, the college of the apostles; the one hundred and forty-four thousand represent the growth into full numbers of the choice

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, [a]a great multitude, which no man could number, [b]of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, [c]clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, that no man could number, out of every nation, and of *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands;

a Rom. 11:25....b ch. 5:9....c ch. 3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; ver. 14.

ones of God." The number, therefore, is itself a symbol, and by no means to be taken as expressing an exact enumeration. Its recurrence in such connections may indicate to us the unchangeableness as well as the definiteness of the divine purposes of grace. Of this, more in the General Comments.

9-17. THE GREAT MULTITUDE.

9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. Here the reading, "After these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα), is the correct one. The rendering may, in other respects, be made more exact: "After these things I saw and behold a great multitude which no man could number" [the verb being in the past tense] *out of every nation* [the word for "nation" being singular, while those which follow are plural], *and of* [*all*] *tribes, and peoples, and tongues.* [The past tense, "*could* number," instead of the present "*can* number," may perhaps have been chosen because it presented the idea in a more realistic, pictorial way—as if the attempt had been made, or at least contemplated, and found to be altogether beyond the power of human computation.—A. H.] Alford's note, here, is, "that this very specification of a multitude without number, carries us past the first and millennial resurrection, indicated in the two former parables of Matt. 25, and past the final judgment sublimely described at the end of that chapter." He regards the words in Matthew, "but the righteous into life eternal," as indicating "the point at which our vision takes up the prophecy." It is more than doubtful if any such close and exact parallelism between the passage in Matthew and the passage here, as Alford takes as the basis of his whole scheme of interpretation in this part of our book, can safely be assumed. That the Apocalypse is, in substance, the expansion and completion of that twenty-fifth chapter, as Alford and others seem to think, is as much pure assumption as any other of the many theories invented with a view to a like purpose. Illustrative parallel passages may be found in abundance, as aids in our exposition, alike in the Old Testament and in the New; but we have no indication anywhere in the book we are studying, that it has more than this general connection with any other part of Scripture. Each passage is best understood in its own connection, and it is here that we must seek a clue to the interpretation of what is now before us. Two general thoughts, each of great moment in any right view of God's methods of grace and providence, are presented in those two significant representations under which all the symbolism of this chapter may be grouped: (1) The first of these is the watchful guardianship of God in behalf of his own people, and his adjustment of the methods of providence to the methods of grace during this entire dispensation. Final judgment is not suffered to come upon the world until the purposes of grace have all been accomplished. Of those who had been "given" him in the covenant of redemption, the Redeemer must be able to say, "I have lost none." The number of the elect will be exact and complete. This idea is set forth in the sealing, and in the round number of twelve thousand from each tribe, and of the hundred and forty-four thousand as the sum of all. This is "*the election of grace.*" (2) But another idea needs to be made prominent and clear in this connection. The inference must not be left that the number of the finally saved is *limited* in some such way as indicated in the numbers employed, or that, even, it should be in the power of human calculation to express the "multitude" of those whom the Redeemer brings with him in the final triumph and glory of his kingdom. To set forth here, in this connection, the pregnant fact in this regard, we consider to be the purpose of that portion of our chapter which is now under consideration. There is, no doubt, a general reference to the result of redemption as it shall appear when the elect of God shall be gathered in. But we do not understand that there is any specific, least of all any "chronological," description of the Lord's second coming, as if in any precise order of

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, [a]Salvation to our God [b]which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
11 [c]And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
12 [d]Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

10 and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto
11 the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen:
12 [1]Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God

a Ps. 3 : 8; Isa. 43 : 11; Jer. 3 : 23; Hosea 13 : 4; ch. 19 : 1....*b* ch. 5 : 13....*c* ch. 4 : 6....*d* ch. 5 : 13, 14.——1Gr. *The blessing and the glory, etc.*

events we had now been brought down to that end and summary of all. The vision represents, in this respect, not a chronology, but a doctrine, and aims to fix the thought, not upon an event, but upon a truth. This truth is, that while, as before represented, "the Lord knoweth them that are his," while not one of them shall fail in the final gathering of his elect, the actual number of such is "a great multitude which no man could" tell—a multitude out of the power of human methods of enumeration to express.—**Stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.** Hasty readers of this book, we imagine, sometimes overlook the fact that the position of the sea has remained unchanged, while it is only in special features of the vision that change occurs. He is like one watching the successive scenes of a drama, in which new personages and new incidents from time to time appear, while the spectator, the stage, and the general surroundings are the same throughout.—**Clothed with white robes.** The white robes are emblems of righteousness, "the righteousness of the saints."—**And palms in their hands.** There is, probably, here, an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles, in which ancient Israel celebrated their deliverance out of Egypt, and the triumphant conclusion of their wilderness journey. "The people," says Ellicott, "forsook their homes and dwelt in booths; the streets were full of glad multitudes who carried branches of palm and olive and myrtle; everywhere the sounds of rejoicing and singing were heard; 'there was very great gladness'." It was also the feast of harvest, or of "ingathering." The sealing before described bears some analogy to that sprinkling of the door-posts of the Hebrew homes in Egypt which protected them from the destroyer, commemorated in the Passover; the appearance now on the scene, of this great multitude of rejoicing and triumphing ones, each with a palm-branch as the emblem of victory and peace, is the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles, celebrating the safe passage of the wilderness and the joyful "harvest-home."

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Some would read, supplying the ellipsis, "Salvation *is* unto," or "*is due* unto"; others, "Salvation *be* unto," "be ascribed unto." The latter is preferable. Carpenter, in Ellicott, thinks that the language in ver. 14 warrants us in taking the salvation, here, in its most comprehensive sense, "including every deliverance from the curse of the law, from the power of sin, and from the perils of life." We should note here, again, how the Lamb is named along with "our God," and made the recipient of equal honor as the author of salvation.

11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. We may translate, with the revisers, "And all the angels were standing." The second "about" should be omitted. It is "the innumerable company of angels" mentioned before, in ch. 5: 11. Here, as there, they appear as encircling the group first revealed in the sublime theophany, and as beholding with interest and with acclamation these successive acts of the vision in which the wonders of divine administration appear. We are reminded here, as we listen to this response to the chorus of the redeemed, of what our Lord tells us of the "joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." How much more over this "great multitude which no man can number"?

12. Saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen. Carpenter, in Ellicott, notices what he terms the

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in [a] white robes? and whence came they?
14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, [b] These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have [c] washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

13 [1]for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came
14 they? And I [2]say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

a ver. 9....b ch. 6:9; 17:6....c Isa. 1:18; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7; ch. 1:5; see Zech. 3:3, 4, 5.——1 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages*....2 Gr. *have said*.

seven-fold form of this ascription, arranging it thus:

Amen!
The blessing, and the glory, and the wisdom,
And the thanksgiving,
And the honor, and the power, and the strength,
(Is) unto our God,
Unto the ages of the ages,
Amen!

This seven-fold arrangement is so far arbitrary, that one hesitates to accept Carpenter's view of it, as showing "the close of the Church's agony," and as opposing "the view which would limit the seals to some short period of the Church's history." It is doubtful if any symbolical seven-fold adjustment of the clauses is intended, while to found an important point of exposition upon what may so easily be a mere fancy of the expositor, is to hazard a good deal. At the same time, there *is* no good reason for limiting this portion of what appears in connection with the opening of the seals "to some short period of the Church's history." The vision does not cramp itself within chronological limits and bounds, but in this place, as perhaps in others, leaps over all such, and exhibits the fruit of redemption in its completeness—the purpose being, as before shown, to make clear that while in the sealing and numbering of the servants of God, is figuratively set forth the exactness, in order, method, and result, of God's electing grace, the real and actual fruits of that grace are such as here displayed. In presenting to us this general truth the whole scheme and period of redemption are brought under view, and we see the saved as they shall be when the heavenly harvest-home is proclaimed.

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me. The elder "answers" to a question in the mind of the beholder; not at once with an explanation; but by first putting that question in words—expressing the seer's own thought.—**What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?** The better translation is: "These who are clothed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?"

14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. "Sir," or, "My Lord" (κύριέ μου). It is the language, not of worship, but of respectful address.—"Thou knowest." I do not, and it therefore belongs to thee, not to me, to tell.—**And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation.** "Out of *the* great tribulation (τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης) we should read, rendering the article of the Greek. We should also read "those coming," "those that come (οἱ ἐρχόμενοι), in the present tense, not past, as in the Common Version. The meaning is: "those who are now coming, and in the end will have come, out of the great tribulation." These last words may have some allusion to what has before appeared in the vision, especially under the second, third, fourth, and fifth seals, indicative of the scenes of trial and conflict awaiting the Church of God in a world so torn with tumult and wasted with ravage. This does not, however, limit their proper scope, as they do not appear to have in view any one form or period of such trial; but the whole period of Christian trial—various as we see it, in nature and form—"the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Out of this in the successive ages and generations of time, the "great multitude" of the redeemed come.—**And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** There is here, again, a mistake in the rendering. We should read: "And they washed. . . and made," not *have* washed." The correct translation points back more explicitly to that former, earthly life of the redeemed in which this cleansing from all sin took place. The imagery employed is found more in the writings of John than in those of any other of the evangelists. Where, in the thirteenth chapter of his Gospel, ver. 4–11, he describes the washing of the disciples' feet; in the first chapter of his First Epistle, ver 7: "If we walk in the light, as

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall [a]dwell among them.
16 [b]They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; [c]neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne [d]shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: [e]and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle
16 over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon
17 them, nor any heat: for the Lamb who is in the midst [1]of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

a Isa. 4:5, 6; ch. 21:3....*b* Isa. 49:10....*c* Ps. 121:6; ch. 21:4....*d* Ps. 23:1; 36:8; John 10:11, 14....*e* Isa. 25:8; ch. 21:4.——1 Or, *before*.

he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"; and in that familiar saying of the Baptist, recorded alone by this evangelist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—in these cases, as in the passage before us, we find that view of the redemptive work upon which John delights to dwell. Where the agency of the redeemed themselves appears—"*they* washed," etc.—is clear. They came to the fountain of cleansing; came in faith to Jesus, whose blood cleanses; in him obtained pardon, and in his righteousness were clothed upon, so that now their "raiment" is "clean and white."

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God. The "therefore," in this place, "on this account" (διὰ τοῦτό), is in some sense emphatic. Only as thus washed in the blood of cleansing *could* they be thus "before the throne of God."—**And serve him day and night in his temple.** We do not forget that "there is no night there," nor that John tells us in another place (ch. 21:22), that in the heavenly city he saw no temple. The words, here, however, contain imagery drawn from the earthly life, and under that imagery heavenly things are expressed. "The "day and night" simply means continual, and the "temple" indicates merely the nature of the service. The whole representation, taken together, is that of holy, happy, restful occupation in the service of God. The heavenly life, therefore, is not one of mere repose, but of blissful activity.—**And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.** The word for "dwell" (σκηνώσει) is to be especially noticed. It means to pitch a tent or tabernacle, to encamp. In this word, as Alford says, "is contained a multitude of recollections: of the pillar in the wilderness, of the Shechinah in the holy place, of the tabernacle of witness, with all its symbolism." We might read: "He that sitteth upon the throne shall spread his tent over them," or, as Ellicott translates, "shall tabernacle over them." The last named writer thinks also, that there seems to be "a carrying on of the imagery derived from the Feast of Tabernacles; as there were the palm-branches of the harvest joy, so there will be the booth or the tabernacle of God's presence among them. He shall be their pavilion, their shelter." It is noticeable how entirely the saved in heaven find their sources of felicity and of all good in God. Later in this book, we are told how the very light of the Holy City is the glory of God and of the Lamb, and in another place that "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." And here, in harmony with such representations, God makes his presence to them as the spreading shelter of a tabernacle. God and the Lamb are to them "all *in* all."

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. This imagery may be intended to point a contrast between their present condition and that which they experienced when in "the great tribulation." [Is there not here a reminiscence of the condition of the chosen people as they were led through the great and terrible wilderness to the promised land? —A. H.] It may express either literally the forms of human distress particularly named, or under these, as a figure, all the varied ills falling to the lot of man in the vicissitudes of his earthly life, including such as peculiarly, in some ages, have befallen the children of God. "Out of" all that, these "come," and of none of them shall they again have any experience. And the reason is given.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of

waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. The American Company of the English and American Revisers think that we should read "before the throne" (τὸ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ θρόνου). This rendering makes the sense more clear. Instead of the word "feed," the revision has "shepherd" (ποιμανεῖ), "shall be their shepherd." The changed rendering expresses the sense much more fully. It also translates, as will be seen, "and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life"; which is also more correct than the common version. The final words are given, "and God shall wipe away *every tear* from their eyes"; a more explicit and emphatic expression than the more general "all tears," and with wonderful vividness declares how entire shall be the deliverance from every cause of sorrow, trial, or pain. "The great tribulation" is for them wholly and forever past.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We may now recall the attention of the reader to what is said in the Introduction (§ 5), with reference to the Judaico-Christian character of the representation under which in this part of our book the kingdom of God appears. That series of visions found in ch. 4: 11, we regard as viewing the Church of God, or the Kingdom of God, under the aspect in which the apostle Paul, and others, so often consider it, as the true, or the antitypical, Israel. The language and imagery employed in this seventh chapter are so expressly to this effect, that we may here call attention anew to the point—a very essential one in the theory of interpretation we are following. Especially do we note this—that the "sealed," the elect of God, are represented as from the twelve tribes of Israel. We have thus brought to view (1) the fact that, as Paul says, "they are not all Israel that are of Israel"; (2) also, that yet broader truth contained in words which the same apostle quotes from the prophet Hosea:

> I will call them my people, which were not my people,
> And her beloved, which was not beloved.
> And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people,
> There shall they be called the children of the living God.

If the reader will observe, carefully, he will see how strictly the symbolism throughout these ch. 4: 10, is conformed to this general view of the people of God, as the true Israel. There will be other occasions for calling attention to this.

Especial mention should also be made of the constancy of the representation which associates "the Lamb" with "him that sitteth upon the throne," in all divine acts, whether of judgment and punishment, or redemption and deliverance. The doctrinal significance of this is fully apparent.

The connection of thought, or representation, in the successive visions, up to this point, should be carefully observed. Six of the seven seals have now been opened. Under the first four, events signalizing the progress of the kingdom of God among men are foreshadowed; its victorious and triumphing opening era, the outbreak of the long struggle of the kingdom of evil in opposition; startling and testing vicissitudes in the inroads of damaging error, and the assaults of persecution. Here a pause occurs in the movement of the great drama, in its historical aspect. The fifth and sixth seals present, not so much *methods* and *incidents* of divine administration, as *principles* and *purposes*. It is as if to one observing these great events, transpiring upon such a mighty scale, and arraying in opposition elements so tremendous, questions arise. It almost seems as if the wicked prevail. The power of the world is in the hands of God's enemies, and they use it to oppress and murder God's children. What is the meaning of this? Has God abandoned his own cause? Will he never vindicate it, and those who die in defending and promoting it? Does the very gospel of his salvation fail? And will his gracious purpose of redemption be after all defeated? Under the fifth and sixth seals these questions are answered. God's martyred saints are heard crying to him. He promises to avenge them speedily. It is shown, too, how his purposes are being wrought out with the exactness of arithmetical enumeration, so that of his redeemed the number shall be full to the very last and latest of the "called, and chosen, and faithful." Not one shall be lost. The number shall be round, full, and complete. And the greatness of it shall surpass even the possibilities of human conception—so perfect shall be the execution of the divine plan, so transcendent the final triumph and reign of redemption in the kingdom of God's grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND [a] when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

1 And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an

[a] ch. 6:1.

We incline to the opinion that the opening of the seventh seal should have been, in the division of chapters, placed in this immediate connection; that the first verse of the eighth chapter should have been made the closing verse of the seventh. The stirring scenes of the visions under the six seals would then reach an appropriate close under the seventh. As this last seal is opened, the loud voice of praise in heaven hushes into silence. The scene of the vision, late so crowded with actors and events, so tumultuous and stormy in its representations of the awful issues and incidents of human history, is stilled into quiet, while the thronging shadows retire, and leave it as when the thunder-clouds in the sky have passed away, and all the heaven is serene.

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

1. Opening of the Seventh Seal. **And when he had opened the seventh seal.** If in the division of chapters, this verse had been placed, as probably it ought to have been, at the close of the seventh chapter, its relation to what follows, in this now before us, would have been more clearly evident. Or rather, it would have been more readily perceived how, with this verse, which describes the opening of the seventh seal, the visions immediately connected with the opening of the seals come to a pause. Under the sixth seal redemption is seen in its full accomplishment. Grace is triumphant; the harvest of salvation is gathered in; the "tribulation" is past, and the final blessedness has come. The silence which follows the opening of the seventh seal, as will be noticed below, is in these circumstances deeply significant; in this interval of silence, what is especially imported by the seals reaches its consummation, while a new series of visions begins. All this would have been suggested at once, if in the arrangement of matter in this book, the verse which describes the opening of the seventh seal had been put in what seems its true connection.—**There was silence in heaven.** At the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15), "great voices in heaven" cry: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." At the pouring out of the seventh vial," a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne," cries: "It is done." In each case there is a *consummation;* of what nature, will appear when we come to consider the passages referred to. At the opening of the seventh seal, upon the contrary, no "great voice" is heard; but deep silence reigns throughout heaven. We perceive that this also denotes a consummation; yet one different from what is seen in the other cases. The use of the number seven, also, in the case of the seals, of the trumpets, and of the vials, shows that the series of visions occurring under each of these is *complete* in itself; this symbolical number, as we often remark, denoting, always, completeness. We are allowed to assume, therefore, that each of these series has its specific subject, presents some aspect peculiar to itself, of the kingdom of God among men, or of the world of men in relation to that kingdom; and that in each case the Apocalyptic order is so far complete, that in each the method of divine dispensation brought under view, is carried forward to its final achievement. In each case, also, the key to the whole series of visions is found in that which first appears. Under the seals, the first of the series presents to view the gospel of salvation in its opening triumphant era. The visions that follow exhibit, under general aspects, the subsequent fortunes of this Dispensation of God's grace to men; the vicissitudes that befall it, the defeat and discomfiture that often threaten it; and still the complete final fulfillment of all its designs. In like manner, as we shall see, a clue to the right exposition is supplied, in what appears as the trumpets are about to sound, and the vials to be poured out. We understand, therefore, that under the seals is presented the kingdom of God *as a dispensation of grace;* it is *redemption*, attempting, and finally achieving purposes of infinite mercy

2 [a]And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; [b]and to them were given seven trumpets.

2 hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

a Matt. 18: 10; Luke 1: 19....b 2 Chr. 29: 25-28.

to men; its final fruit being "a great multitude" of saved ones which no man can number. These are finally seen in their saved and happy state. This consummation is appropriately indicated by the "silence," which follows, symbolical of heavenly rest and heavenly peace—the beginning, according to Victorinus, first and oldest of the commentators on this book, as quoted by Alford and Wordsworth, of eternal rest: "*initium quietis æternæ.*" This we take to be the simple and only significance of this silence. "It is," says Carpenter, in Ellicott, "the rest of the troubled on the breast of God."—**About the space of half an hour.** It is not to be supposed that any exact space of time is intended here. Consistently with the symbolical dress in which all these visions are clothed, an *interval* of silence is mentioned: but only with a view to carry out thus the symbolism. If we translate the Greek particle more exactly, this will appear. We shall then read: "There was silence in heaven, *as it were* (ὡς) for half an hour."

2-6. THE TRUMPET ANGELS.

2. And I saw the seven angels which stood [*stand*] **before God.** We prefer to view these as representative angelic forms, seen in vision; not actual angels, as Düsterdieck, nor archangels, as De Wette, nor "the seven Spirits of God," (Rev. 3: 1), as Ewald. Carpenter's view is preferable. He regards "the seven angels as representatives of the power of God over the world. They are the seven, the completed circle of God's power in judgment; for as we do not take the seven spirits to be literally seven spirits, but symbols of the complete and manifest influence of the one Holy Spirit, the third person in the glorious Trinity, so neither need we infer from the mention of the seven angels here that they are literally seven pre-eminent angelic personages, but rather regard them as symbols of that complete and varied messenger force which God evermore commands."—**And to them were given seven trumpets.** Much depends, in the exposition of what follows, upon the view taken of the symbolism of the trumpets. The seals, the trumpets, and the vials evidently play a great part in the Apocalyptic machinery (if we may be allowed that expression) in this part of the book—in all that portion of the book, in fact, which more immediately concerns the kingdom of God in its earthly sphere. Each, besides, must be regarded as having its own especial significance and design. What this is in each case may be in some measure inferred from the thing itself thus employed, and from its symbolical place in Scripture usage. The seal is the symbol of secrecy, and when broken indicates that in a more or less strict sense the secret is made known. Vials, as used here and elsewhere, are symbols of influence or effect *poured forth* in special dispensation, mostly of judgment and punishment. The trumpet, in ancient Hebrew custom, fixed by divine ordination, had a twofold purpose: to call the people together on festival days, and on ordinary occasions of worship; and to blow the alarm of war. "If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies." (Num. 10: 9). Then, also, for the festival day, this direction is given in ver. 10 of the same chapter: "In the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings." As a signal for the march, too, the trumpets were to be blown, as directed in ver. 5, 6, of the chapter quoted. It is quite consistent with the Judaic dress in which the entire symbolism of this part of our book appears, that the trumpet angels are here introduced, while the fact that this symbolism *is* thus Judaic, must supply the clue to its significance here. We say, then, that while the seals relate to what is *interior* and *essential* in the kingdom of God, the trumpets relate more to what is *exterior*, and in a more strict sense, *providential.* The Apocalyptic seal may be viewed as having respect

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with [a] the prayers of all saints upon [b] the golden altar which was before the throne.
4 And [c] the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

3 And another angel came and stood [1] over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should [2] add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which
4 was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, [3] with the prayers of the saints, went up be-

a ch. 5:8....b Ex. 30:1; ch. 6:9....c Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10.——1 Or, *at*....2 Gr. *give*....3 Or. *for*.

to that covenant of God with his people, set forth anciently under the types of the sanctuary, fully declared in the provisions and promises of the gospel, and executed in the progressive gathering of the elect out of "the great tribulation." The Apocalyptic trumpet respects rather the historical fortunes of the church, its outward contact with all in the world that is hostile to it, in the vicissitudes of its long journey and battle in the wilderness, and in conquering its final inheritance. What this implies must appear as we proceed.

3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer. The revisers evidently prefer "over" (ἐπί) the altar," though they place "at" in the margin. The former rendering seems preferable. The Greek preposition, with the dative, is more correctly translated "over," than "at." We must suppose, then, that the angel appears in a hovering attitude. The altar of burnt offerings has before been mentioned (6:9); the altar in this place seems to be the golden altar of incense, standing in the holy place. The scenery of the vision thus, from time to time, introduces the more marked features of the ancient sanctuary, reminding us, repeatedly, that it is the Israel of God—the *true* Israel—of which we are here reading. Lange objects, with good reason, to Düsterdieck's idea that the "*other*" angel mentioned "is to be regarded as a real angel," since that, says Lange, is equivalent to saying "that the Apocalypse is not to be treated as a symbolical book in this passage, either." But, then, does not Lange himself abandon the symbolism when he views this angel as no other than the Lord himself? Since the angelic forms before seen are symbolical, and rather representative of *ideas*, *principles*, and *forces*, than as actual personages, why should not this "other angel" be so viewed as well? In ch. 7:2, after the mention of the four angels of the winds, "another angel," evidently to be taken in a similar way, is introduced. The same thing occurs here. "There is really," as Ellicott says, "no need to ask who the several angels are. The angels are not particular personages, but symbolical of those agencies—whether personal, or natural, or supernatural—which are employed by him that sitteth on the throne." That this angel holds in his hand "a golden censer" is appropriate to the fact that he stands by the altar of incense.—**And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.** Ellicott translates, "that he might *give* it unto the prayers of all the saints." The revision reads, "*add* it unto." Either is preferable to the common version, and "give" is more exact than "add," although the same thought would in this place be expressed by each of these two words. This thought is, evidently, that the angel unites the incense with the prayers, making them thus acceptable. It is said that this incense is "given" to the angel, from which it is clear that he does not have it of himself; so that we cannot consistently regard him as the actual and personal Mediator. It is "*much* incense" that is given to him; thus implying the abundant measure of this element of acceptableness mingled with the prayers of the saints. The incense itself we must take as that mediatorial efficacy imparted to true prayer offered in the name of Christ, the intercessor. Does this angel, then, discharge here an intercessory office? We should say, rather, that he represents, in symbol, that intercessory office as discharged by our Lord himself. There is, therefore, nothing whatever of the Romanist notion of angelic mediation.

4. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand. The words "which came" are supplied in our common version. They need not be read. We may read, "The smoke of the incense went up before God, with the prayers of the saints." Who are intended,

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and [a] there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, [b] and an earthquake.

5 fore God out of the angel's hand. And the angel [1] taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it [2] upon the earth; and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

a ch. 16: 18....*b* 2 Sam. 22: 8; 1 Kings 19: 11; Acts 4: 31.——1 Gr. *hath taken*....2 Or, *into*.

here, by "saints"? In the ancient sanctuary, while the officiating priest offered the incense at the golden altar, the people without the holy place were praying. So we read in Luke 1: 10, "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." So in the vision, here, the "saints," God's people on the earth, perhaps also the saved in heaven, are, while the angel at the altar offers the incense, supposed to be praying "without." We are to associate with what actually appears in the vision the thought of a praying multitude, especially the suffering, toiling, and battling saints on earth, lifting up their cry to God. With this prayer, whatever the special petition, in whatever language spoken, whatever the conditions of the praying one, there is joined the mediation of the great Intercessor, by which it is made acceptable "before God"; is heard, and in God's way and time shall be answered.

5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar. In the worship of the ancient sanctuary, the fire with which the incense was kindled was taken from the altar of burnt-offering, thus prefiguring the truth that the mediation of Christ, in whom and in his great office all these types were fulfilled, drew its efficacy from the fact of his sacrificial death in atonement of human sin. The fire which the angel in the vision casts into the earth, however, seems to be taken from the golden altar—the fire with which the incense had already been kindled and consumed. This implies how direct is the connection between the prayers of God's people, and those results which follow in answer to prayer. For as the angel cast this fire from the golden altar into the earth, **there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.** We may find an illustrative passage in Psalm 18: 6-9: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet." Only, what is by the Psalmist thus vividly given in poetical language, appears to John in the vision he is beholding, as if it were all actual and real. Yet, in the one case as in the other, the description is imagery, not a recital of actual fact; under the guise of this imagery we have here presented the general idea, or truth, that when his people in their "distress" call upon God, he hears them, and that he answers them in providential interpositions as manifest, as signal, and often as terrible, as the "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" of the vision.

All this, now, is prelude. The trumpet angels stand waiting, as if for the signal to sound. The portents just described indicate that the prayers of the saints are heard. What follows, as the successive trumpets sound, is the effect seen, as amidst the vicissitudes of its earthly career, God appears for his church, and brings all its struggle and battle to final victory.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It seems important that a few points, general in their bearing, should here be noted, before we proceed with the exposition. A question much discussed is, whether the trumpets are to be regarded as forming a part of what follows the opening of the seventh seal. Elliott, Barnes, and some others, view the seven trumpets as coming under the seventh seal, and the events announced by the trumpets as chronologically sequent to those indicated by the seals. Alford treats "the two courses of vision" as "evolved out of one another," although not to be viewed as if the events represented by them were "consecutive in order of time." Dr. Wordsworth, in his "Hulsean Lectures for the Year 1848," delivered before the University of Cambridge, thinks the trumpets "do not *succeed* the seals;

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 The first angel sounded, [a]and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast [b]upon the earth: and the third part [c]of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast [1]upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

a Ezek. 38: 22....b ch. 16: 2....c Isa. 2: 13; ch. 9: 4.——1 Or, *into*.

yet that they *synchronize* with them. Not," he says, "that the periods of the seven trumpets correspond to the periods of the seven seals, respectively; but that the *whole* period of the trumpets is the same as that of the seals." He views them, also, as differing "in *kind*." Carpenter, in Ellicott, thinks that the series of visions under the seals closes with the silence in heaven, upon the opening of the seventh, and that then an entirely new series begins. This, also, is Hengstenberg's view, and is that which we adopt in our own exposition. Dr. Wordsworth farther views the vision under the seventh seal as suspended, simply, and as renewed at the beginning of ch. 21. At the point of suspension (7:17), the closing words are: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." When the description under that seal is renewed, the opening words (21:1) are: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Wordsworth says, alluding to the former of these: "The writer is now called away to prophesy again. He must not yet dwell on the joys of heaven; he has other prophecies to deliver concerning the sufferings of earth. He must not yet speak of glory, but of judgments. He is snatched away by the Spirit from the silence of the seventh seal, to listen to the terrible blasts of the seven trumpets; his description of the heavenly rest and heavenly glory being resumed in ch. 21: 1." We may add that after the sounding of the sixth trumpet, and while the seventh angel prepares to sound, a like apparent suspension occurs. John is forbidden to write what the seven thunders then heard had uttered; and as he takes the "little book" from the hand of "the strong angel," it is said to him: "Thou must prophesy again over [in the margin '*concerning*'] many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (*Revised Version*). Subsequent to this comes all that is contained in ch. 12-19. Then in ch. 20-22, the final consummation appears.

It would seem, therefore, that in these successive series of visions to which the seals, the trumpets, and the vials belong, the same general period is brought under view, which is the period of the historical manifestation of the kingdom of God among men, with all which that imports. Only, in each a different aspect of that kingdom is presented, the historical element involved coming forth in greater and greater distinctness with each succeeding series of visions. The sealed book comprehends the whole, and it therefore in a sense becomes true that what is contained under the seventh seal is finally made known only as the last Apocalyptic word is spoken.

As still further prefatory to what we wish to say in our own exposition of the trumpets, we may observe that, as is familiar to every student of Christian history, there are in that history certain epochal outlines, such in their character, and their relation to the whole, as that we must suppose them to be the notable features of the prophecy as they are of the history. Among these are the destruction of the Jewish "state and nation," and therein the final passing away of the Judaic Dispensation; the fall of the Roman Empire, involving the destruction of the old pagan religion and pagan civilization; the great Christian apostasy, when the Man of Sin was revealed; and then that restoration of the primitive Christianity through the Reformation which has so wonderfully changed the world's face, religiously, with other and even greater changes foreshadowed. Whatever of minor incident may be included, we cannot be mistaken in assuming that in the Apocalyptic scheme here unfolded, these leading ones, so vast in themselves, and so amazing in their consequences, must surely be sought by the expositor. It is by this general outline, besides, that we shall guide ourselves most safely, and so be preserved from that bewildering complication of historical detail, which has made so many of the expositions of this book mere wildernesses of speculation and conjecture.

6, 7. The First Trumpet Sounds.

6. And the seven angels which had the

seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. "Raised the trumpets to their mouths," says Alford, "and stood in attitude to blow them."

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, alluding to the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, just witnessed, and the scene that followed: "*This is* that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel:

> And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
> I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
> . . . . . .
> And I will show wonders in the heaven above,
> And signs on the earth beneath;
> Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
> The sun shall be turned into darkness,
> And the moon into blood,
> Before the day of the Lord come,
> That great and notable day."

The passage in Joel plainly predicts what should be seen under the Gospel Dispensation. The verses from which the apostle quotes (Joel 2: 28-32), begin: "And it shall come to pass afterward [Peter changes it to "in those days"], that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh"; and they close with the words: "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." This is a clear prediction of that day of grace for men which should cover the whole period of gospel proclamation and progress; the church of Christ, with its spiritual provisions and agencies, being prefigured by Mount Zion and Jerusalem. The language descriptive of what follows the sounding of the first trumpet, as is readily seen, closely resembles that in the more ancient prophet. We cannot but observe, also, its likeness to what appears in the description of the Egyptian plague of hail (Ex. 9: 23, 24): "The Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous." In the present case, there is "fire mingled with *blood*." The application by the apostle of the passage in Joel, and the marked similarity between the imagery in that passage and our present one, seem to justify us in regarding the vision seen at the sounding of the first trumpet as presenting to view the opening period of the gospel. It answers to the opening of the first seal and the going forth of the rider upon the white horse; only here the other side of the picture is presented. That opening era, though marked and made memorable by gospel triumph, was still, in other aspects, a scene of signal divine judgment. We see no necessity for carrying forward the description to events that shall attend the final judgment, or to extend it beyond such as transpired during the generation which witnessed the first preaching and early triumphs of the gospel. What the prophet Joel predicted, and what the symbolism we are now studying imports, is not literal hail, fire, or blood, but judgments of God upon the enemies of his word and his Son, as signal and as destructive as was that of the hail and fire sent upon the oppressors of ancient Israel in Egypt, and realized in such events as the invasion of Judea by the Romans, and the destruction of the holy city with attending circumstances of suffering, horror, and dismay seldom experienced in the whole history of the world. This event comes into view repeatedly in our Lord's own predictions of things then future, and it stands in such relations to the origin and final establishment of Christianity, as justify us in viewing it as certain of recognition in such a book as this now studied. The vision under the first trumpet is, therefore, in some sort retrospective, as under the first seal; and yet not altogether so, for the effects of the great events so symbolized were still seen in John's own time, and even some of the events themselves were then in progress, or yet to come. What we understand by this vision, then, is the *providential dispensations* with which God accompanied the first proclamation of the gospel, and in which he visited with deserved judgment and destruction the first of those great opposing forces—the Judaic "state and nation"—by which that proclamation was resisted. In the passage, here, one feature appears which we do not find in either of the parallel passages referred to. The fire is "*mingled with blood*." This imports, what in fact history records, that among the judgments thus sent was that of war—bloody, relentless, destructive, in a supreme degree.—**And the**

8 And the second angel sounded, [a] and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: [b] and the third part of the sea [c] became blood;

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

a Jer. 51 : 25; Amos 7 : 4....b ch. 16 : 3....c Ezek. 14 : 19.

third part of the earth was burned up, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burned up. This is of course, pure imagery, consistent in its nature with that which goes before. The cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan are sometimes used in Scripture symbolism to represent human pride; those lofty ones of the earth who sometimes boast themselves even against God. An example may be found at Isa. 2 : 12, 13. "Grass" is often used to denote humanity in general. It may not be forcing the imagery too much to understand by the trees and the grass in our present passage, upon the one hand, men in power, "proud and lifted up," and upon the other, those in lowlier condition, upon all of whom, indiscriminately, the judgment falls. We must not, as Carpenter says, "press the phrase, 'the third part,' too closely; it clearly is designed to remind us that in wrath God remembers mercy, and that while he humbles all, he will not utterly destroy." It may be noticed that while "the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, *all* the green grass was 'also' burnt up." This, perhaps, implies nothing more than what is well known as a fact, how in such calamities as those indicated by the imagery here used, it is upon the masses of the people that the blow chiefly falls; just as when in a great conflagration covering wide districts of country, while many trees in the forest, though blasted and stripped of their foliage, are yet not wholly consumed, the low-lying grasses are completely devoured by the wide-spreading flames.

8, 9. The Second Trumpet Sounds.

8, 9. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea. "As it *were* a great mountain";—the *appearance* of such a mountain—an object like a volcano in full eruption, flaming, smoking, and roaring. The imagery of the mountain, simply, is somewhat variously used in Scripture. "Flee as a bird to your mountain"; "The mountain of the Lord's house"; "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even forever." In such passages as these the symbol is plainly employed in a good sense. But, upon the other hand, we have in the prophecy of Zechariah (4 : 7), a use of the same imagery in a sense quite opposite: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." A passage in Jeremiah (51 : 24, 25), similar in general effect, is strikingly illustrative of this in Revelation: "I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain." See, also, Rev. 16 : 20; Matt. 17 : 20. What the volcano is among the mountains, such Babylon, Egypt, Rome, as heathen powers and nationalities, have been in the world. The burning mountain is an object of awe and terror, rather than of admiration and attraction. The cloud upon its top is not the harbinger of refreshing showers, but speaks only of the abyss of fire out of which, in the time of eruption, the floods of devouring lava pour. So the power which rules in human affairs, while it is often a defence and a blessing, may become mere oppression and destruction; it may defend and promote the aims of God's kingdom among men; it may hinder, and, so far as permitted, ruin and lay waste. Consistently with what seems prophetic usage in this case, we must regard the symbolism of the burning mountain in our present passage as being of this kind. When such a power is itself destroyed, it is not much unlike a burning mountain cast into the sea. It is uprooted from its place. It is submerged and lost amidst the world's nationalism in general. Yet the tumult that accompanies the overthrow is such as the commotion of the sea would be, were such a vast body hurled into it. By "the sea," therefore, we may understand national life in general, sometimes organic and orderly, sometimes anarchic,

9 [a]And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

9 and there died the third part of the creatures that were in the sea, *even* they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

[a] ch. 16:3.

tempestuous, and billowy, like the sea when stirred to its depths. There have been times, in the history of the world, when the entire scene of human things was such as this; and usually it has followed some great national overthrow, like that which seems to be here described, when in the passing away of a mighty power whose supremacy has held the world in some kind of subjection, general disruption and anarchy result, and generations, perhaps, succeed before, in the confusion that follows, new centres of such power are found, while about these centres new organisms form, new systems of nationality rule. **And the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.** "The third part of the creatures (κτισμάτων), they that had life, died," is a better translation. This, it must be kept in mind, is still pure vision and symbolism, having its root, however, in what is pre-eminently true to natural fact. If we imagine such a thing as a volcano cast into the sea while in raging eruption, we perceive indeed how its fires would in time be quenched, and the vast mass lie inert, or be buried in the soundless depths. But before this, its poisonous gases will have spread death far and wide through the waters, and in the commotion following its fall, ships will be engulfed or cast as wrecks upon the shore. This is the picture presented in the symbolism of our passage. If we apply the imagery in those historical changes which it clearly shadows forth, we cannot but feel its truthful force. When a great political power, like Babylon or like Rome, perishes, the immediate consequences are often such as are here implied. Who does not recall the social chaos, the moral anarchy, the overflow of every species of poisonous delusion, the slaughter and the general misery, which followed the destruction of the French monarchy, resulting in the revolution so memorable in history? Similar in character, though on a far wider scale, were the events following the destruction of pagan Rome. That overthrow was, as every reader of history knows, brought about by an irruption of barbarian invaders, by which, in a long series of destructive wars, the various countries embraced in the empire were overrun, cities sacked and burned, lives destroyed in myriads, and the very foundations of social order for a while torn away. The imagery in our passage represents, almost with the accuracy of literal fact, the aspect of the whole Roman world, during that long period in which the old civilization perished, and the bases of the new civilization were laid. In what relation it all stood to the progress of God's spiritual kingdom, is evident at once. The New Dispensation needed a new theatre for the scene of its development: a new type of humanity, we might say, in which to carry on its regenerative processes. That "burning mountain," old-world Paganism—concentred at last in the Roman nationality, with its fierce spirit and its oppressive imperialism—whose poisonous smoke had infected the atmosphere of the whole world, and whose lava floods threatened universal destruction, had to be "removed" and "cast into the sea." The prayer of faith, as our Lord had promised—prayer made acceptable by that incense of prevailing mediation which the angel at the altar "added unto" it—availed to that end. But such a power could not, and did not pass away with such quietness as a cloud might sail across the sky. It passed away amidst commotion and destruction, precisely such as the symbolism in our passage so vividly imports. Here, again, we do not press the phrase, "the third part." Like the whole passage where it stands, it is symbolical, and is to be read as importing wide destruction, yet a destruction held by a merciful providence within limits; Jehovah "in his wrath" still "remembering mercy." As Alford expresses it, "Though the judgment is, as to extent, fearful and sweeping, yet God, in inflicting it, spares more than he destroys; two-thirds escape, while one is smitten."

10, 11. THE THIRD TRUMPET SOUNDS.

10. And the third angel sounded, and

10 And the third angel sounded, [a] and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, [b] and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;
11 [c] And the name of the star is called Wormwood: [d] and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the foun-
11 tains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

[a] Isa. 14:12; ch. 9:1.....[b] ch. 16:4.....[c] Ruth 1:20... [d] Ex. 15:23; Jer. 9:15; 23:15.

there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. The revisers prefer to translate the Greek, *lampas*, as "torch." It is a sense more in harmony with the idea of a falling and blazing star. The translation, "lamp," however, might well be retained if it be kept in mind what the ancient lamp was—a dish partly open, filled with oil, with a large wick projecting from one side. Such a lamp would very nearly be our present idea of a torch, and we may accordingly regard the two ideas, of a lamp and a torch, as combined in the symbol. At the outset of the visions in this book, the "star" is used as a symbol of the teacher of the divine word. In the Lord's right hand, in his first appearance to John, were "seven stars," and these stars were "the angels of the seven churches." This may to some extent be a guide to us in the interpretation of the same symbol wherever employed, as such, in the book. At all events, it is more in keeping than any other with the Apocalyptic usage, to give it such a meaning in this place. A like usage is found elsewhere in Scripture. In Daniel (12:3), it is said, "They that turn many to righteousness" shall shine "as the stars, forever and ever"; and in Jude, as descriptive of a character quite opposite, we read of "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness." It is not necessary, however—to take the star in our present passage as indicating a specific person—as Arius or Pelagius, or any other one of the heresiarchs whom history names. It is more consistent with the usage of the book to treat it as indicating a *personification*, rather than a *person*, as in the case of the beast, the woman drunk with the blood of saints, and others. The most natural view of the symbol is to take it as representing a system, or an organism, either charged with, or having assumed the duty of, spiritual teaching; or perhaps the combination and society of such teachers, so personified as to have a figurative individuality, and here represented by the star. The imagery under the third trumpet is thus in keeping with that under the second. The mountain cast into the sea, represents the overthrow of that pagan supremacy which had so long ruled the world from the seat of political power. Under the third trumpet we have that higher sphere of things exhibited, the spiritual and heavenly, represented under the symbol of the firmament where the stars that give light move and shine. One of these falls from that sphere, and, ceasing to be a light and a beneficence, becomes an element of darkness and destruction. The natural interpretation of it, and one in keeping with imagery occurring in the connection, is to view it as an apostasy, and that not of a single individual, but of some power or combination in which the disastrous change appears. From a star giving light from the firmament, it changes to a torch falling upon the earth, a blight and a destruction.—**And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.** This, too, must of course be treated as imagery, and, consistently with Scripture usage in general, must denote the sources and streams of spiritual life and refreshment, such as are provided in instituted means of grace.

11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood. In Jeremiah 23:15, we read: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land." In Amos (5:7), they are denounced and warned who "turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth." And again, (6:12): "Ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." Moses says, in warning the children of Israel against idolatry (Deut. 29:18): "Take heed lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." And it is in a like allusion that Paul says (Heb. 12:15): "Look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;

12 [a]And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
13 And I beheld, [b]and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, [c]Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.
13 And I saw, and I heard [1]an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

a Isa. 14:10; Amos 8:9....b ch. 14:6; 19:17....c ch. 9:12; 11:14.—1 Gr. *one eagle.*

lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." With these illustrative passages before us, it need not be difficult for us to interpret the name of this fallen star, or to understand the historical allusion. It is apostasy which we have thus before us, resulting in defilement, and changing what were intended for waters of life into bitterness and poison; the very fountains of such being thus corrupted; "the wells poisoned."—**And the third part of the waters became wormwood.** The phrase "third part" must be taken here as in the instances noticed before.—**And many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.** It is spiritual life that is thus destroyed; that life which the water of life in the gospel is intended to nourish and refresh. When the truth of that gospel is corrupted by false teaching into bitterness and poison, the souls of men drink of it, and perish. It is clear, now, that this whole description may apply to false teaching of all kinds; and the symbolism of the third trumpet may thus be capable of such expansion as to cover all the forms of such in the various ages of Christian history. Pre-eminently, however, it applies to that concentration of all the worst heresies ever invented—and directly or indirectly the source of even the infidelities that have cursed the world—*the Papacy*, the Man of Sin; itself a "mystery of iniquity," wormwood and death to the nations.

12. THE FOURTH TRUMPET SOUNDS. **And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.** The view is again directed to the firmament, from which the blazing star fell. What the symbolism implies is failure and dimness in the spheres from which spiritual light descends to the world; not that highest heaven where God is, but that lower one represented by his church, ordained as "the light of the world," as our Lord has said. The events under this fourth trumpet appear to synchronize and accompany those under the third. In that firmament from which the star fell, other ominous changes occur. As a matter of history we know, that accompanying that great apostasy, the Papacy in its final development, there was not only a general corruption of Christian doctrine; but such perversion and misuse of all means of spiritual provision, as to leave the wide nations under papal rule in a condition to perish for lack of knowledge. That period which goes in history by the name of "the Dark Ages," might not inaptly be viewed as represented by this failure in the lights of heaven. Such a shadow as this imagery imports then fell on the earth. That period, too, we must remember, fills a great place in the general scheme of God's dispensations. "It is through seasons such as these," says Ellicott, "when the lights of human wisdom and spiritual guidance seem alike obscured, that the church must go forward. The chaos precedes creation, and it is through chaos again that the Church of Christ must pass to the new heaven and the new earth. These trumpet-visions, if read by the side of the glory of Genesis, seem like the undoing of creation; the vegetation is smitten, the earth and sea are intermingled, the lights of the heavens are darkened, the living things in seas and streams are destroyed, but—

> Further life the world shall draw
> From their decay."

"The pulling down must precede the building; the removing of the degenerate is one step in the way of regeneration."

13. THE THREE WOE TRUMPETS AN-

NOUNCED. **And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven.** The Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts read "eagle," instead of "angel." This reading is adopted, it will be seen, by the revisers, and being sustained by such manuscript authority as that just named, is no doubt to be preferred. Some, as Carpenter, in Ellicott, translate "one" (ἑνὸς), or "a single eagle." The Greek word, however, in this and some other places in the New Testament, seems to have little more force than our indefinite article. Compare also, the translation, in usage of the Latin word *unus*, signifying "one," to the modern indefinite article, Italian, *uno, una;* French *un, une;* English *a*, or *an.* The eagle thus flying through "the meridian sky," and "visible to the very horizon, is," as Carpenter says, "an appropriate emblem; high-soaring as the spirit of the seer, the eagle-glance scanned the borders of the earth, and caught sight of the coming troubles, and gave warning, swift and strong as the judgments of God, its very form gave emphasis to the warnings of its voice."— **Saying, with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.** Because thus announced, the remaining three trumpets are commonly called "the Woe Trumpets." The announcement implies that the evils about to be visited upon the earth, exceed in magnitude even those already described, and that in view of what is now soon to occur, the world's inhabitants have especial reason to tremble and be in dread. What this imports must be left, till we come to study these three "Woe Trumpets" themselves.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

There are two extremes, toward one or the other of which most writers upon the Apocalypse seem to us to lean. One is that of historical literalism, carried sometimes into great detail; an attempt to find some historical personage or event corresponding with each more marked feature of the vision, and set down with the chronological exactness of the history itself. To take an example—Elliott, in "*Horæ Apocalypticæ*," understands by the four trumpets we have been considering, the four Gothic invasions of the Roman Empire, resulting in the dissolution of that empire, and the forming of new nationalities. The first (A. D. 400–453) is that under Alaric and Radagaisus: the second (429–477) that of Genseric; the third (450–453) that of Attila; the fourth, the final overthrow of the empire, and the establishment of the new kingdom of Italy under Odoacer (A. D. 476). By like methods, Elliott, Barnes, and others find for leading features in the several visions through out the book historical correspondences, many of which severely tax their invention, and all of which are open to the objection that others might be selected which would answer the purpose just as well. It is, in our opinion, utterly impossible, upon this plan, to arrive at results in Apocalyptic study that will command general assent, or be of any real help to readers of the book.

The other method, verging toward an opposite extreme, is that of Alford and Carpenter, though as used by these two expositors, differing in special features and differently applied. This is to treat the visions as having *no definite historical meaning*, or application, but pictures in general of the conflict of spiritual and worldly, divine and devilish, forces in the centuries of Christian history, with the judgments visited upon the enemies of the truth and of God. Alford considers that the coming of the Lord in his second advent is the idea kept before us in this whole series of visions, from the beginning to the end of the book, and that the scenes depicted simply represent to us the operation of those providences through which that coming of the Lord is prepared. Carpenter is more general still, in his view. These pictures present to us, as he thinks, the clash and collision of great principles and forces, in a general field of operation, with results repeating themselves more or less from one historical period to another, their symbolism fulfilled in those great moral changes which transpire in the course of Christian history. There is in each form of this method of interpretation an inadequacy, of which the reader becomes almost painfully conscious as he proceeds. The successive visions—for example, under these four trumpets as explained by Carpenter—seem almost like repetitions of the same general facts in human experience. Under each trumpet it is false religion, with the moral forces proceeding from it, in con-

flict with true religion, the latter prevailing, because God is on its side. Carpenter will allow us to see, in certain specific historical events, *illustrations* of the general fact he draws from the successive pictures as they appear, and sometimes it seems as if he were willing that something specific, distinct, and historically definite shall be found permissible. Upon the whole, the reader feels that the questions he mainly asks himself, as he reads the words of the book so expounded, remain after all unanswered.

There seems, really, to be no good reason why, because one of these extremes is rejected, the other should be chosen. The *great epochs* in history may, it appears to us, be signal lights in the interpretation of prophecy. This is certainly the case with the prophecies of the Old Testament; why not in those of the New? Epochal changes are the proper subjects of prophecy. Historical minutiæ, like those traced out by the school of interpreters to which Elliott and Barnes belong, are rarely so used; and if used at all, it is because of the important bearing they individually have upon the fortunes of God's kingdom, or their immediate concern with the history of his people. Such as these are exceptional. It is by the great beaconal epochs that we must find our way, in the work of Apocalyptic interpretation. In the book we study, a vast stretch of time is covered. Almost two thousand years of it have already passed. How many other thousand years are yet to come, none of us can tell. We cannot, upon the one hand, believe that the prophecy in this book concerns itself with subordinate incidents of the history in any part of it; neither upon the other hand, can we believe that there is to be *nothing* historically specific in the results we gain from our study. We therefore prefer the medium course, and in the view we take try to equally avoid both extremes.

It is clear that the seven trumpets, as in the case of the seven seals, we are to treat as in groups of *four* and *three*. There is a principle of resemblance in the four first trumpets as in the four first seals. What this is in the latter case we have already seen. The word "Come" supplies it. In the case of the trumpets, the principle of mutual resemblance is, that in the first group providential events occurring in the world of men are represented under the imagery of miraculous phenomena in the world of inanimate nature, felt by men in their effects. In the three following trumpets, as will be seen, a different class of agencies is employed, while the vision under each is far richer in scenery, and in the number of symbolical figures and events introduced.

It will be seen in the study of the three trumpets yet to come, that we regard them as covering a far more extended period of time than in the case of the seals. With this exception—that, as already explained, we view the sixth and seventh seals as exhibiting in general the final fruits of the redemptive work, and so far as this, reaching on to the time of the end. The trumpets, however, especially the last three, deal more in detail with that long interval which the visions under the seals appear thus to leap over. The seals show how, through all that opposes, hinders, and sometimes almost seems to defeat, covenant grace achieves its end. The trumpets exhibit to us the kingdom of God in the great epochs of its *exterior* history, its direct and outward contact with the world as an organism in contact and collision with other organisms. The trumpet-call, in each case, is as when Israel of old assembled at the sound of the trumpet to face some great crisis in its own history. So it is here; and it is these *crises* which we see depicted in the scenery of the several visions. That the view so presented may be *comprehensive of the whole history*, the series begins at the opening of that history, as is the case also with the seals, while the numerical symbol *seven* shows that, alike as beginning and ending, the series is *complete*. To a certain extent, therefore, there is a repetition under the trumpets, of what appeared under the seals; though, upon the whole, the differences are so great that they are far from being the same.

The reader will perceive, then, that we regard each of the septenary series of visions as *consecutive*, in the sense that they follow the order of those great epochal crises of which history supplies a record so distinct, and as *complete*, reaching in each case from the beginning to a fixed point of consummation, though with a difference as to the measure of detail involved. The grand significance of each is made strikingly apparent at its close. The seals end in the peace and rest of heaven —redemption accomplished. The trumpets

CHAPTER IX.

AND the fifth angel sounded, [a] and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of [b] the bottomless pit.
2 And he opened the bottomless pit; [c] and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

1 AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fall unto the earth: and there was given to
2 him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the

a Luke 10: 18; ch. 8: 10....b Luke 8: 31; ch. 17: 8; 20: 1; ver. 2: 11....c Joel 2: 2, 10.

end with the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ —victory achieved.

SOUNDING OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS.

1-12. The Fifth Trumpet Sounds.

1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a great star fall from heaven unto the earth. The word for "fall," here, (πεπτωκότα) is the participle of the perfect, and its English equivalent would be, "*having fallen*," or "*which had fallen.*" The meaning, then, is "a star which had fallen from heaven unto the earth." The case is not as in that of the sounding of the third trumpet, when John saw a star in the act of falling; what he sees now is a fallen star on the earth—the *time* of the fall being in no way indicated.—**And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.** More literally, "the key of the pit of the abyss." The same word (ἄβυσσος), abyss, is used at ch. 17: 8, where we are told that "the Beast" ascends out of the abyss. Also in 20: 3, we read how Satan is bound and cast into the abyss. The evil spirits driven out of the demoniac, as described in Luke 8: 31, prayed that they might not be sent into *the deep*—the same word as here. There can be no doubt that in all these places, as in our present text, the pit of hell is meant. As to the fallen star, we find it in ver. 11 of this chapter indicated as a person, of whom it is said that his name in the Hebrew is Abaddon, "Destruction," "Perdition," and in the Greek, Apollyon, "Destroyer." All these indications suggest that the fallen star, here, is none other than Satan, whom our Lord declares that he saw "as lightning, fall from heaven," and whom Isaiah (14: 12) seems to apostrophize when he says: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Identifying the star thus, we recognize the agency described under this fifth trumpet as Satanic, and the effects of it are to be understood accordingly. In his command over all such agencies, Satan has "the key of the pit of the abyss."

2. And he opened the bottomless pit [lit., *the pit of the abyss*]. The Sinaitic manuscript omits this; but other ancient manuscripts retain it, and we observe, accordingly, that the revision makes no change here.—**And there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke out of the pit.** Here we have the first effect of the Satanic agency described. Under the fourth trumpet occurs what seems in some respects similar; the sun, moon, and stars are "smitten," and "the third part of them was darkened," so that "the day shone not for the third part of it, and the night likewise." The effect so described, as we have seen above, proceeds from a failure in the ordained luminaries to give light as was appointed them; or, applying the imagery, a failure in fidelity on the part of those whose office it especially is to serve as "the light of the world." In the present case, the darkness is directly caused by Satanic agency. Out of the pit an influence proceeds, symbolized in vision by "the smoke," the first effect of which is to still further obscure and darken, "the air" being filled with the black and poisonous smoke, and the very "sun" shut from view. Associating, thus, what appears under these two trumpets—the fourth and the fifth—we observe two causes, differently originated, operating to a like end. Under the one trumpet the world is darkened through the failure of the ordained lights of heaven to shine in their due measure; under the other, an obsuring darkness ascends out of the pit itself. Satanic malice unites itself with human unfaithfulness, and as the result of these two causes combined, "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people."

3 And there came out of the smoke [a] locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, [b] as the scorpions of the earth have power.
4 And it was commanded them [c] that they should not hurt [d] the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not [e] the seal of God in their foreheads.
5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, [f] but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

3 smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them,
4 as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of
5 God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a

[a] Ex. 10: 4; Judg. 7: 12....[b] ver. 10....[c] ch. 6: 6; 7: 3....[d] ch. 8: 7....[e] ch. 7: 3; see Ex. 12: 23; Ezek. 9: 4....[f] ver. 10; ch. 11: 7.

3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth. Scarcely any point in Apocalyptic interpretation has occasioned more difficulty, than the identification of these "locusts." Perhaps writers have been disposed to seek *too far* for the key to the solution. By those who hold by a strictly historical theory, they have been variously taken as symbolizing the Vandals, the Goths, the Mohammedans, the Jewish zealots; by others, as throngs of raging heretics; by others, the pope as the fallen star, and his monks as the locusts. It seems singular that it should not have at once occurred to these writers, that as the "fallen star" is so evidently Satan himself, and as the "locusts" come out of the "smoke," and the "smoke" out of the "pit," the whole representation must be regarded as Satanic in character, and as introducing the human element rather as the object than the agent of the effects described. This, too, is implied in what follows. **—And unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.** The very phrase, "scorpions of the earth," points toward what we have suggested. It does not mean "land-scorpions," as some appear to suppose; but simply means such scorpions as are found in the earth, or *real* scorpions. These locusts, born in the pit, and carried over the world in the wide-spreading smoke, sting and poison, as do "the scorpions of the earth." The same general suggestion is given us in the verse that comes next.

4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree. That is to say, the locusts here described do not act as real locusts; they do not destroy vegetation; they have a special mission, consistent with their nature. They are to *hurt men;* yet only those **which have not the seal of God in** [*upon*] **their foreheads.** These locusts, like the natural locusts, prey upon that which it is their nature to seek. The natural locust seeks every "green thing" within reach; lives upon it, destroys it. The locusts from the pit, seek those human beings whose unregenerate and evil nature invites attack; such as "have not the seal of God in their foreheads." This points us back to 7: 3, where those agencies which had been appointed as instruments of divine judgment are commanded to delay their action "till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads"; by which, as already explained, is simply signified the general fact of God's care for his own people. "Sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," the Spirit of regeneration, with outward signs in godly living which disclose to the world their "calling and election," they are thenceforth objects of divine care; and however "tribulation" may still be their lot, this is not, as in the case of the godless, meant for judgment and punishment; it is the trial of faith, rather, or opportunity given for bearing testimony; or "chastenings," which, though at present "not joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness" (Heb. 12: 11). In our present passage the sealed ones are seen as thus shielded. The "plague" of the locusts does not reach them. Whatever it may be, it is such in its nature as that the "servants of our God" do not feel it. We seem, by this, warranted in concluding that the visitation of locusts is not to be understood as barbaric or Saracenic invasion, nor as the persecution by popes and monks, nor any other of those evils which fall more or less upon all men alike, or which even, perhaps, rather single out than avoid the followers of Christ.

5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them. "Them" is the most critical reading, referring to men in the previous verse. Here is a further indication that by the locusts cannot be meant Goths, or

6 And in those days [a]shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
7 And [b]the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; [c]and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

6 man. And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die,
7 and death fleeth from them. And the [1]shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto

[a] Job 3: 21; Isa. 2: 19; Jer. 8: 3; ch. 6: 16....[b] Joel 2: 4....[c] Nah. 3: 17....[d] Dan. 7: 8.—1 Gr. *likenesses*.

Vandals, or Mohammedans, or destructive *human beings* of any sort. Such, in their inroads and ravages, *do* "kill men." These locusts are not to "kill."—**But that they should be tormented five months.** The subject of the verb changes here, in an abrupt manner. It is the "men" who shall be tormented. "Five months" is the usual time during which locusts continue their ravages. This time is mentioned here simply to carry out the symbolism. Or perhaps we may say that as the natural locust has its period, so also has this locust in the vision. The visitation will have its course, as is the case when a region of country is overrun by the clouds of locusts which, while they remain, devour every "green thing," and against whose ravages no provision avails.—**And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.** Painful and poisonous—such is the sting of a scorpion. So with these locusts—their sting poisons, and at the same time torments.

6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. "And death *fleeth* from them," is better. This is the effect of the "torment." One cannot well help feeling that the description resembles that which, we are given to understand, is the wretched condition of lost souls in their final perdition. We read of "the smoke of *their* torment"; of the "weeping and gnashing of teeth"; of "the second death," which is still not death in any sense of ceasing to be; or the annihilation that would be so welcome. The torment described in the passage now considered seems strikingly like this. The source of it is the same—the pit—and the nature of it the same, however it may be as to degree. In the plague of these locusts men upon the earth suffer a "torment" like that which the lost suffer; it is, if we may use the forbidding, yet expressive phrase, "a hell upon earth."

Now, to the question whether history supplies what corresponds to all this, the answer need not surely be difficult. There have been times when Satanic agency, the multiplicity and activity of every kind of devilish ministry, has been one of the notable features of the period. Such times occur often in connection with disruptions such as we believe to be pointed out by the second, third, and fourth trumpets. When the restraints by which human passions are ordinarily controlled have been thrown off; when general disorder prevails; when human wickedness breaks out of bounds, and government, society, all forms of instituted order—fall into a state of chaos, that is Satan's "hour and the power of darkness." Those conversant with modern history will have no difficulty in finding such periods. A notable one was that in which the present European nationalities were in process of formation, while out of the political and social chaos the new order of modern society slowly emerged. There was, perhaps, never a time in the whole history of the world, when the violent instincts of human nature were so absolutely unbridled, when the sting of every kind of evil passion was so intense, when the sin of a fallen world wrought such misery in its victims. The imagery is most apt and just which pictures the atmosphere of those "dark ages" as gloomy with smoke out of the very abyss, while from the smoke every kind of evil and poisonous spirit proceeds. The condensed summary of the whole picture is that the wickedness of the wicked becomes its own punishment, and that where the wickedness is worst the misery is most intense. There is nothing else that so makes life a burden. The most awful and the most unendurable curse ever suffered by man is his own sin.

7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle. "The *likenesses* of the locusts" would be more exact according to the Greek, yet perhaps "shapes" is better English in this place. We may also read, "prepared for *war*." The

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and [a]their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.
9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* [b]as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: [c]and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

8 gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were
9 as *the teeth* of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses
10 rushing to war. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power

a Joel 1:6....b Joel 2:5, 6, 7....c ver. 5.

appearance of the locusts shows them "prepared" to make "war" on men. The description which follows, certainly seems to be in some degree conformed to what is actual in the natural locust; and still it is, quite as certainly, not *limited* to that. Upon the words quoted above, Ellicott's Commentary observes: "The resemblance of the locust to the horse (especially in the head), has been remarked upon by travelers, and has found expression in the Italian and German names, *Cavalletta* and *Heupferd.* The resemblance is more distinct when the horses are made ready for battle, the hard shell or scales of the locusts having the appearance of armor." These resemblances, however, are, as the same writer seems to suggest, simply, as we may say, a *basis* for the general description, which brings in features to which no proper correspondences can be found in the locust as it actually exists.—**And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.** There is something in the head of the locust which may suggest this description, yet it is only a suggestion. The description, as a whole, implies attributes in these locusts suited to the nature of the beings they represent, and the mission they fulfill.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. "De Wette," says Alford, "quotes from Niebuhr an Arabian proverb, in which the antlers of the locusts are compared to the hair of girls." Some resemblance has also been claimed by writers to exist between the under jaw of the locust and that of the lion. Alford, however, thinks that we should take both parts of the above description as "purely graphic," and as "belonging to the supernatural" elements in the vision. It is to be observed, nevertheless, that the several features of the representation as given are such as the actual fact in the characteristics of the destructive creatures named most naturally suggests. Between these "supernatural" locusts and the natural or actual ones, there is, after all, in each particular named, a resemblance which shows that the picture of the one is drawn with the general likeness of the other.

9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron. "As it were" breastplates of iron; showing that this is not an actual soldiery which is described, whether Goth, Vandal, Saracen, or whatever else; but appearances resembling soldiers; or rather resembling the *horses* (ver. 7) of innumerable cavalry.—**And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.** Or, "rushing to war." We should also point so that the clause "as the sound of chariots," and the clause "of many horses," etc., may read as appositional, thus, "as the sound of chariots, of many horses, rushing to war." They were "prepared for war," and for war upon "men." They rush abroad, therefore, as seen in the vision, like an army of fierce soldiery, eager to destroy, while the roar of their demon wings is like the thunder of innumerable chariots of war hurrying on to the fight. How graphically does this describe the fury with which Satanic agencies of every kind seem to assault the human race, in a time when "iniquity abounds!"

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to hurt men, five months. This repeats, in substance, what is already said in ver. 5.

Looking back, now, over the description as a whole, we find Ellicott's summary of its several features evidently just. The seer, he tells us, while keeping in view general characteristics of the locust plague, partly drawn from the early prophets, makes "some original additions. They are locusts, but they have the malice of scorpions; they advance like horse soldiers to battle; they wear crowns; they bear a resemblance to men; there is something woman-like also in their

11 [a]And they had a king over them, *which is* [b]the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his* name Apollyon.

11 to hurt men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek *tongue* he hath the name [1]Apollyon.

a Ephes. 2: 2....b ver. 1.——1 That is, *Destroyer*.

appearance, and in their voracity they are as lions. The exigencies of the symbolism are quite beyond the features of the ordinary locust; the sacred writer shows us a plague in which devastation, malice, king-like authority, intelligence, seductiveness, fierceness, strength, meet together under one directing spirit, to torment men." And it is true that those agencies of instigation and all evil impulse by which men are in some periods hurried on to deeds of surpassing wickedness, take all these various forms. When we come to apply the symbolism, historically, we are allowed to recognize the counterpart of what is thus described in more than one of those forms which the wrongs and miseries that men inflict on each other under this species of instigation, and the miseries they suffer in themselves, while goaded by the scorpion-sting of evil passions, assume. We see, as Carpenter in Ellicott says, "a great symbolical army, multitudinous as locusts, malicious as scorpions, ruling as kings, intelligent as men, wily as womanhood, bold and fierce as lions, resistless as those clad in armor." Those centuries during which the whole world, East and West, was one wild scene of ravage, under the wars waged against each other by the rival kingdoms into which the old empire broke up, and in the fierce and murderous struggles of the crusades, when every worst passion of which human nature seems capable raged with a fury nothing less than Satanic, together with all that grew out of the usurpations of the Papacy, and the deeds of treachery and slaughter by which that usurpation was maintained—all these things which history records merely give us glimpses of a world whose spiritual darkness might well be represented under the symbol of belching smoke out of the pit, and whose disorder and misery were such as Satanic influences alone could instigate or cause. More than once, as we know, the state of the world was such that the conviction prevailed that the end of all things, and the awful day of judgment, must be at hand. It is this state of things in general, which we understand to be represented in the vision seen as the fifth trumpet sounds. Through this ordeal, among many, the kingdom of God had to pass—the ordeal, pre-eminently of its conflict "with spiritual wickedness in high places," and in low.

11. And they had a king over them. We read in Proverbs (30: 27), that "the locusts have no king; yet go they forth all of them by bands." These locusts seen in the vision *have* a king, and much more do they "go forth in bands"—go forth, that is, under the direction of a malicious intelligence, which marshals them for their work of wide-wasting mischief, and sets them on.—**Which is the angel of the bottomless pit.** Following the Greek exactly, and in the reading of the oldest manuscripts, we should translate, "*They have over them as king, the angel of the abyss.*" Some writers appear to understand an allusion to some being, not otherwise indicated, who rules the inhabitants of the abyss, and is their king. In the vision, accordingly, they would see him coming forth at the head of all, and leading their onset. It is, perhaps, better to find this "king" in some personage already pointed at in the description; and in that case he can well be no other than "the fallen star." The designation of him as "angel of the abyss," seems to be an allusion to his first appearance in the vision as having the key of the abyss. The word "*angel* of the abyss" is thus in harmony with the general method in this book, where supernatural beings, or forms, charged with the control of certain agencies, whether of good or evil, or made the heralds of changes in the scenery of the various visions as they occur, are so often styled "angels"; as the angels with trumpets, the angels with the vials, the angels holding the four winds; and in ver. 14 of this chapter, the four angels bound at the river Euphrates. "The angel of the bottomless pit," or of "the abyss," seems, consistently with this usage, to be the angel having "the key of the bottomless pit," or abyss; in other words, the being indicated by the fallen star. That is to say, we identify both the one and the other with Satan, "the prince of the power of the air."

12 a One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound b in the great river Euphrates.

12 The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter.
13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard [1] a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before
14 God, one saying to the sixth angel, who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels who are bound at the

a ch. 8 : 13....b ch. 16 : 12.— 1 Gr. *one voice.*

Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. We have noticed above the meaning of the names. To no being could they so fitly be given as to him, who, as the author of evil, is the Destroyer, by bad pre-eminence, and in whose personality all the elements of Perdition are summed and expressed.

12. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. If we realize, in any considerable degree, the nature of this which has now come before us under the fifth trumpet, we shall appreciate the warning of the eagle flying in the midst of heaven with his thrice-uttered "woe to the inhabitants of the earth." There was, in that warning, an implication that the evils to come upon men under the three following trumpets were especially to be dreaded. In the case of that just described, we cannot but feel that the warning was appropriate. This woe is now, in the movement of the vision, "past," and two others are yet to "come." This does not imply, we must notice, that the *events* indicated under the sixth trumpet, especially, are sequent to those under the fifth. We understand by it, simply, that *as represented in vision* it is "past."

13-21. THE SIXTH TRUMPET SOUNDS.

13. The sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. The Sinaitic manuscript reads, "from the golden altar," omitting the words "four horns." The Alexandrine reads "from the horns of the golden altar," omitting simply the word "four." The revised version adopts the latter, and translates, accordingly, "I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God." The sense will not be materially affected, whichever of the readings be preferred. It is the general locality of the voice that is significant. The golden altar in the vision is that on which the incense given to the prayers of the saints was burned. It was thence that these prayers, made acceptable by the much incense, "ascended up before God." That which, under this sixth trumpet, is about to occur, seems thus to be put in relation with "the prayers of the saints." In other words, we are again to witness the unfolding of divine dispensations and procedures, which come in answer to prayer. There is nothing to indicate by whom the words of direction that follow are spoken. It is more in keeping with the spirit of the description as we have it, to understand this only—that it is "a voice."

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet. This command is given to him, Alford thinks, "only in so far as he is the representative and herald of all that takes place under his trumpet-blowing."—**Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.** The revisers translate "*at* the river Euphrates," which makes the sense much clearer, while grammatically more exact. The Greek preposition used here (ἐπί), when it governs the dative of place, is not translated "in," but either "upon," or "at." The latter is plainly the word here. The river Euphrates, must be treated as symbolical, in the same way as "Babylon," "the holy city," "the new Jerusalem." To treat *these* as thus symbolical, and *that* as literal, would be against all rule, not only, but all propriety in the interpretation of imagery occurring in the same general connection. When we turn to seek the exposition of the symbol, difficulties present themselves. Yet these, if we gain the right point of view in our study, will mainly disappear. For that point of view we go back to the history of God's ancient people. In the times of Israel's apostasy and idolatry, the punishment with which God visited them with a view to reclaim and restore, came chiefly in the form of invasion by heathen nations. And these nations, almost invariably—*all* the most formidable of them—came from the direction of the Euphrates, Assyria, Babylon, Damascus—

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

15 great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third

these were the instruments, for the most part, of judgment and punishment, through which God chastised his people in the times of their backslidings. If, now, we still bear in mind that in all the series of visions found in this part of the book we are studying (chs. iv.–xi.), the church of the New Dispensation is viewed as the substance of that type which was furnished in the Israel of the Old Dispensation, we shall readily perceive, that the symbolical Euphrates must stand in a relation with the symbolical Israel, like that which the literal Euphrates bore to the literal Israel. That is to say, it denotes in general the direction and source of the judgments with which an apostate church is about to be visited. This apostasy has been very strikingly set forth under the third, fourth, and fifth trumpets; the darkness descending on the earth from a firmament where the ordained lights had failed to shine, and ascending out of the pit in a deeper "blackness of darkness" still; the inroad of evil through the failure of that Christian instrumentality and influence by which it should have been stayed; and in general a condition of the Christian world not unlike that of the land of Israel in the times when "the Assyrian came down, like a wolf on the fold," or when Babylon made of Judea and Jerusalem a threshing-floor. That such is the nature of the allusion seems clearly to be inferred from what appears, by verses 20, 21, of our chapter, to be *the purpose* of "the plagues" sent forth under this trumpet. We are there told that "the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet *repented not* of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." This description applies alone to that period of the Christian Dispensation which we understand to be indicated by the third, fourth, and fifth trumpets, and to the condition of the Christian world as it was when the great apostasy was at its height. The papal religion was an idolatry, a worship of pictures and images, of saints ("demons"—departed spirits) and angels, above all in its form of Mariolatry—a perversion of the religious instinct in man, and of every revelation of himself which God had made, with a view to inspire and guide the love and the worship of his creatures, as flagrant and as ruinous to the souls of men, as any worst form of Paganism. The judgments under this sixth trumpet come as the punishment of that idolatry, and of the crimes prevailing in connection with it. As God visited apostate Israel under the Old Dispensation, so now he visits apostate Israel under the New. To indicate the source and the nature of the visitation, a symbolism is employed consistent with this parallelism. "The four angels" bound "in [*at*] the great river Euphrates," are the instruments of the punishment. Four great powers, lying contiguous to the river Euphrates, are mentioned in Scripture as having important relations with Israel. Three of these we have already mentioned—Assyria, Babylon, Damascus. The fourth is Persia—not conspicuous, indeed, as an oppressor of the people of God; in some instances quite the contrary, as when Cyrus permitted the captive Jews to return, or when Darius Hytaspes authorized the rebuilding of the temple. Still, it was a heathen power, willing, as in the case of Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, to oppress the Jews, and even to slaughter them by wholesale; while his son, Artaxerxes Longimanus, exhibited active hostility in forbidding the temple rebuilding which the Jews after their return had commenced. It would, perhaps, be an arbitrary and strained view of the symbolism in our present passage, to treat the "four angels" as alluding to these four heathen powers—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Damascus—throned by the Euphrates, and so largely used in God's providential dealing with his ancient people. And still, there may be reasons in favor of such a view, not unworthy of consideration. At all events, we can scarcely go amiss in saying that the symbolical Euphrates, in this vision, calls our attention to the *source*, and in some sense the *nature*, of the visitation under this sixth trumpet.

15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year. We

16 And [a]the number of the army [b]of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: [c]and I heard the number of them.
17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone; [d]and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

16 part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand:
17 I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates *as* of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth

a Ps. 68:17; Dan. 7:10....b Ezek. 38:4....c ch. 7:4....d 1 Chron. 12:8; Isa. 5:28, 29.

should translate, "*the* hour, and day, and month, and year." The common version is misleading, here, as implying that the words designate a precise period during which the visitation to be described should last. Such is not the meaning; but that a certain hour, day, month, year, is appointed—that is, a certain fixed moment of time, when what is to be described should occur. So it had been "prepared" in the divine purpose and plan. —**For to slay the third part of men.** "That they should kill the third part of men"; that is to say, "they," the four angels, as instruments of the divine purpose. The special mission here assigned indicates a significant point of difference between what occurs under the sixth trumpet, and that which took place under the fifth. The locusts were especially charged that they should not *kill*, but torment. Here the command is to *kill*. This, then, is *war*, of which we are about to read; not war of infernal hosts out of the pit, which "torment," but do not "kill," but war as history records it, only in this case peculiarly destructive. In it "a third part of men" will perish: the words not indicating in this case, more than in those before noticed, any exact proportion, but simply how large a number, though a number having in the divine purpose its exact limitation, will be the victims of this war, or succession of wars.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen. He had just spoken of the four angels. Now he proceeds at once to describe the hosts which go forth under their leadership, or at their command. It seems to be taken for granted that the mission of the four angels "to slay the third part of men" will be at once understood as the marshaling of great armies in destructive wars.—**Were two hundred thousand thousand.** "Two myriads of myriads," Ellicott translates. "Twice ten thousand times ten thousand," is the translation by the revisers. Two hundred millions would be the number so represented. Clearly, the number is symbolical, and to be viewed purely as a feature of the vision.—**And I heard the number of them.** "The number of them" as they appear in vision; and as thus representing the fact that in the wars so pictured the hosts assembled in the contending armies will be vast beyond the power of literal expression.

17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them. The writer now describes the figures seen in the vision—both the horses and their riders.—**Having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth and brimstone.** The meaning is that the breastplates had *the appearance* of fire, of jacinth, and of brimstone. "The jacinth color," says Ellicott, "seems to be the dark purple or blue so often seen in smoke.—**And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions.** Symbolical of the fierce and destructive nature of the wars in which these hosts are marching forth. —**And out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.** All these features are intended to make the symbolical forms in the vision more accurately and vividly representative of that which the vision itself symbolizes. These armies are innumerable, signifying how general, as respects the inhabited world, this marshaling of armies will be, and what mighty hosts will come in collision on the various battle-fields. The very horses which the soldiers ride are ferocious in aspect; they have the heads of lions—fiercest of all beasts of prey—and out of their mouths go forth fire and smoke and brimstone, indicative of the infernal nature of the spirit by which these wars shall be instigated. It is as if, of that spirit, the very horses which bear the combatants, partake. The riders are in a like manner terrible in appearance. They wear flaming breastplates—the purple hue of smoke mingling with the fire, and a color of brimstone, as if suggesting that the armor and the weapons of the fierce soldiery are furnished out of the pit itself. It is

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: [a] for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.
20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues [b] yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship [c] devils, [d] and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
21 Neither repented they of their murders, [e] nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

18 fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded
19 out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads, and with them
20 they do hurt. And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and
21 of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

a Isa. 9 : 15....*b* Deut. 31 : 29....*c* Lev. 17 : 7; Deut. 32 : 17; Ps. 106 : 37; 1 Cor. 10 : 20....*d* Ps. 115 : 4; 135 : 15; Dan. 5 : 23....*e* ch. 22 : 15.

straining the imagery far too much, to suppose any reference here to the invention of gunpowder, and the changes thus introduced in means of human destruction. The description throughout is simply the *costume*, if we may so speak, of the vision, and representative, purely, of the general fact, that the wars thus foreshadowed were to be in a surpassing degree, inhuman, fiendish in spirit, and destructive in effect. This is more specifically set forth in what follows.

18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone. This must be understood simply as imagery, symbolizing destruction, wasting and terrible.

19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. There would seem to be in the imagery here, something like an identification of the horse with his rider. The horse partakes of the rider's fierce and destructive spirit, and shares in the murderous fight. And, indeed, in the tumult and fury of the fray, the horse and rider do seem alike terrible, especially in battles as waged in the olden time, when the fight was hand to hand, and was a mere trial of brute strength and ferocity. The description here implies, in the wars as symbolized in the imagery used, more than human ferocity and destructiveness, and more than that of the fiercest brutes. The picture becomes infernal in aspect as we study it. Out of the horses' mouths sulphurous flames pour, while their tails become serpents, armed with ferocious stings. The imagery suggests the idea of wars and battles waged in a spirit more fiendish than is even usually the case; in which this spirit shall be indicated in a manner express and terrible. In the "General Comments" we shall dwell more at length upon what may, as it seems to us, be viewed as the historical realization of this prophetic symbolism. It must suffice, here, to say that during the general period whose various aspects are brought to view under these four trumpets—the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth—especially the later portion of this period, exactly such a prevalence of destructive wars is upon record; wars, in many instances charged with a spirit not less ferocious than the imagery here imports.

20, 21. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. We have made some mention, above, of what is imported by these words. It is now to be observed that the apostate church of the period under consideration—in general to be designated as "the Dark Ages"—the church itself, not simply the world outside the church, was no less corrupt and criminal than the language in these two verses implies. With every one of the crimes here mentioned, the papal clergy and monks were chargeable, and their example encouraged like enormities in those to whom they did not scruple, for a price, to grant absolution for the worst outrages upon humanity, and upon every law of God and man. What seems to be said to us here, is that the terrible wars by which Christendom, thus apostate and corrupt, was laid waste, were judgments of God, "let loose" in divine indignation, as when the heathen hordes in more ancient times came down upon apostate

Israel. The judgment, however, did not work reformation. Myriads were slain; but those who survived, even as history records, "repented not."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

In the exposition of these two trumpets, we aim to abide by the principle of interpretation before explained—to take, that is, a medium course between that method of procedure, on the one hand, which seeks for exact and detailed historical fulfillment for each more marked feature of the vision, and that, upon the other, which in avoiding this extreme, verges so far toward the opposite one. It cannot be extravagant, or unsafe, to assume that the general Apocalyptic scheme has a distinct and definite character in itself, and that this is determined by the foresight of, and the purpose to portray, what is distinct and definite in the history as anticipated. Viewing the trumpets as having reference to what is *exterior* and *providential* in the career of the church—God's spiritual kingdom among men, the *outward* aspects of that history, whose more inward and spiritual ones had already been set forth in describing its *redemptive* processes and results—we find ourselves, in comparing prophecy with history, coming upon periods, following the triumphant, though stormy, opening one, which seem pre-eminently suitable as scenes for the Apocalyptic drama. Indeed, we can scarcely think it possible, that in such a revelation of the future as is understood to be the purpose of this book, events like the great Christian apostasy, or periods of mighty change, and political disruption, like those which accompanied and followed that event, should be referred to only in a vague and obscure way. We look, rather, to find the general aspects of these tempestuous centuries wrought into the drama as marked features of it, and so distinct as to be capable of decipherment and exposition. While, therefore, we regard the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth trumpets as relating to the same extended general period, reaching from the time when the corruptions of Christianity began to tell in an express way upon the whole system of Christian doctrine, discipline, and life, to the time of the Reformation, we interpret these trumpets severally, as exhibiting this period under distinct aspects of it. The third and fourth trumpets present the apostasy in its process and effect. The fifth describes that moral condition which resulted from the combination of two causes —the corruption of Christianity and a general outburst of human wickedness, Apocalyptically represented as brought on through the agency of evil spirits in a new and unprecedented inroad on men; while the sixth is a picture of murderous and desolating wars, which, in point of fact, we know from history to have prevailed in a degree almost unparalleled, and with scarcely an interval of cessation, during all those dark and troubled centuries. Our exposition, therefore, deals with *periods* in the general aspects that especially characterize them; with large *events* and courses of *events*, rather than mere incidents; with *principles* and *forces*, rather than with persons.

It would be easy to find in history illustrations of the general view that we have given of the vision under the fifth trumpet. The barbaric element which came in with the hordes that overran the whole territory of the Western Empire, long survived, and yielded but slowly to the influences of the nascent new civilization. The old civilization, so long as it survived, was vicious and depraved, and only in individual instances felt the regenerating effect of even Christianity. Here was a meeting of conditions ominous enough; and when Christianity, the only influence tending to purify and save, became itself corrupt, and so largely, as is well known, a power for evil rather than good, it was an outlook for the nations as gloomy as can well be imagined. And these portents did not mislead. The history of Europe especially, the chief seat of Christendom, from the fifth to the sixteenth century, is, in the particulars now referred to, one of the most melancholy chapters in the annals of the human race. It is scarcely possible to go amiss in seeking illustrations of the fact in writers who treat of this period. There were, it is true, influences at work tending to good; it was a time of growth, as well as of destruction, of seed-sowing, as well as of rude and wild upturning of primitive soils; a time in which foundations were laid of much that is now deemed most auspicious for the future of the race—and of these features, indications appear in Apocalyptic foretokenings which we have yet

to study. Yet so far as that aspect of it is concerned which comes to view under the fifth trumpet, the story of this period is one of the most painful and the most dishonoring to human nature ever told. An air of romance has been thrown over it by those representations in which what was best in the "chivalry" of the age is selected, and in which deeds of knightly valor or exhibitions of courage and strength are given, with all that should have supplied for the picture its dark back-ground studiously veiled. The grandeur of the feudal system is too often allowed to gild its outrageous cruelties and oppressions; monastic peace and culture, symbolized in the fruitful fields and vineyards which surrounded and adorned the monasteries—a contrast and an example to the rude peoples who gained from thence inspirations toward agriculture and the arts of peaceful life—have too often shut from view the fact that worse sinks of iniquity were not to be found in all the world than many of these ultimately became. The Romish priesthood did, indeed, often interpose to protect the victims of tyranny, and the privilege of "sanctuary" was, in those stormy times, a refuge for thousands and thousands of hunted lives. Yet this very practice of making the altars of God a sanctuary against oppression and murder shows how unprotected human life then was, by all ordinary means, and how little of shelter there was in law or in justice; while, if the priesthood were ready to interpose where the tyranny of others was concerned, there was no power on earth that could shield or save the victims of their own. What relation of life was sacred in those terrible centuries? What law of God or man put a curb upon ferocious passion or brutal desire? To be weak, was to be at the mercy of unscrupulous power. To be poor, was to be enslaved. To have anything that could tempt cupidity, was to be "in jeopardy every hour." To be a Christian indeed, was to be made the victim of persecution; to wear the livery of the Man of Sin, was to be bound to him, body and soul, as the instrument of whatever mean or wicked thing it might please him to enjoin.

We may select, almost at random, a passage which will illustrate all this, as existing in one of the countries of Europe, France, about the middle of the fourteenth century. We copy from Kirk's "Life of Charles the Bold." The condition of things described, had come about through special causes, yet similar causes had been operative, with like results and widely throughout Europe, during many centuries. "The administration of the law," says the writer we quote, "so far as the protection of life and property was concerned, was entirely suspended. Murder and rapine no longer sought their prey by stealth, or waited for the darkness to conceal their work. The country was covered with armed bands, wearing the badges of Burgundy or Armagnac, but subject in fact to no other leader than him who could best scent the plunder and guide them in the pursuit. These brigands infested every highway, and ravaged villages and farms, pursuing the work of destruction without hindrance and without fear. The peasantry, driven to despair, abandoned at length their ruined homes and wasted fields, their wives and children, their lives of industry and care, and fled in troops to the refuge of the thick forests, seeking sustenance with the wild beasts, crouching from the sunlight that shone upon an earth *of which the devil, they exclaimed, was about to take possession.*" The words we italicize might almost be used as a comment upon the passage in the Apocalypse now especially in hand. The picture so drawn is by no means a solitary one, nor was the original of it to be found alone in any one of those gloomy centuries, or any one corner of Europe. The character of the throngs which followed Peter the Hermit in the first Crusade, some three hundred years earlier than the date given above, illustrates only too well the moral condition of the masses of the European population at that time. Says Michaud, the historian of the Crusades: "The civil wars, which had so long disturbed Europe, had greatly increased the number of vagabonds and adventurers. Germany, more troubled than the other countries of the West, was filled with men trained in brigandage, and become the scourge of society. They almost all enrolled themselves under the banners of the cross, and carried with them into a new expedition the spirit of license and revolt with which they were animated. . . . They had been told that the crusade procured the forgiveness of all sins; and in this persuasion they committed the greatest crimes with im-

punity. Animated by a fanatical pride, they believed themselves entitled to despise and ill-treat all who did not join in the holy expedition. . . . Everything which fell into their hands appeared a conquest over the infidels, and became the just reward of their labors. No captain durst place himself at the head of this ferocious troop; they wandered on in wild disorder, and obeyed none but those who partook of their wild delirium." Their excesses, however, were fully paralleled by those of knights and nobles, bearing the proudest names in European chivalry. The rapine and ravage, the merciless slaughter of helpless women and children, equally as of soldiers in arms, the enormities attending the sack of cities, the utter pitilessness of the Crusaders when victorious, as well as their brutal fury in the fight, amply show a survival of the same spirit which animated Goth, and Hun, and Vandal, in their inroads upon the old empire at the time of its tremendous overthrow. These are the mere glimpses of the age which history affords. What they suggest is even more gloomy than that which they disclose. For these are only the heaving billows of a sea, storm-troubled and boiling to its lowest depths. They reveal to us simply here and there a flight of the infernal locusts with whose poisoning myriads the murky air of those centuries was filled. It is in such a time that "men seek death," and lament when they do not "find it"; the burden and misery of life becoming too intolerable to be borne.

In the interpretation given to the vision under the sixth trumpet, a somewhat specific allusion will naturally be understood to be to the wars of Mohammed and his successors, and to the later contests of Christians and Saracens for the possession of the Holy Land. From about the middle of the seventh century, when Mohammed began the enterprise of spreading his religion throughout the world by the sword, until the middle of the thirteenth century, the date of the eighth and last crusade, there was a direct and more or less continuous struggle between the two great religions—Mohammedanism and Christianity. The early portion of this period was occupied in the almost incessant wars of invasion and conquest carried on by the Saracens, with the specific and sustained design of completely destroying Christianity. The period first named, besides, from the middle of the seventh to the middle of the thirteenth century, was that within which the apostate Christianity grew into the proportions of usurped power, both spiritual and temporal, and of corruption reaching to all that is most essential in the religion of Christ, in which it at last bestrode and overshadowed the whole Western world. The parallel which seems implied in the Apocalyptic prediction, is almost a perfect one, between the judgment of God visited upon Christendom as thus apostate in these Mohammedan wars, and that which came upon apostate Israel in the invasions of heathen nations from the East and North. In truth, the hosts of Arabian warriors, who, under the banner of Mohammed and his successors, in less than a single century subdued to the faith of Islam five great nations—Persia, Syria, Egypt, Northern Africa, and Spain—and which at one time seemed likely to overrun the whole of Southern Europe, viewed themselves as instruments of divine anger upon the idolaters of Christendom. To the first of those ferocious leaders, Chaled—who united with extraordinary military skill, a fanaticism and a singleness of purpose which never lost sight of the one idea—the title, "The Sword of God" was given, and this designation became so identified with the whole idea of Saracenic conquest, that until this day it continues to be used by writers in their allusion to the wars of that period. There were, in these enterprises of the Saracens, other extraordinary features quite in accordance with that picture of them which we find here in the Apocalypse. The spirit of conquest has, of course, often so taken possession of individual men, conspicuous in history, as to urge them from one enterprise with that end in view to another, while even a world seemed insufficient to sate the passion which only grew more intense with each achievement. It is true, besides, that these men have shown themselves able to infuse their own spirit into the peoples they ruled and led, so as to make them at least submissive to the exactions necessary in the carrying forward of military schemes so vast, and so wasteful of both treasure and life. But there has never been, we may say, in the whole course of human history, another instance of an entire people possessed with this spirit, as the

Saracens were; amongst whom, in fact, the host of the followers sometimes even went beyond the leaders in the eager passion for conquest, and in the insatiableness of that fanaticism which made the name of Christian one of deepest reproach, and themselves as pitiless as they were fierce. Again, the "four angels" that were "loosed" were "to slay." The expression implies destructiveness united to unsparingness of a special sort. Wherever the Saracens appeared, in the invasion of countries, or the siege of cities, they had one announcement to make—"the Koran, tribute, or the sword"; and when the first two were refused, the last smote without pity, yet was never glutted with slaughter. Like features appeared in the wars between Christians and Saracens in the time of the crusades. One reads the story of those fell encounters with shuddering amazement. The great numbers engaged—the army of the Christians which encamped near Constantinople in the first crusade, numbering some six hundred thousand fighting men; the waste of life on the part of the Christians in the long marches, with no proper provision for the wants of so vast a host, under Syrian suns and amidst the tremendous passes of the Syrian mountains and in the ambuscades where the nimble foe took them at unawares, and slaughtered them by tens of thousands; as well as, upon the other hand, on the part of the Saracens, where the heavy-armed Western warriors had them at a disadvantage, and crushed them like hornets caught in a gauntleted hand—in these things the foreshadowings of the Apocalyptic vision seem to be literally realized.

There, are, again, some coincidences of apparent correspondence between the prophecy and the history as regards the Saracenic invasion above referred to, which we may note, although we must not too much insist upon them as intentional. The four angels are "at the river Euphrates," and to some extent the seats of Saracenic power were there; yet not so much so as to make the name of the river, as it appears in the passage we are studying, any less symbolical. The real centre of Islam was, as it still is, at Mecca, although the successive caliphates occupied for their capitals, cities like Bosra and Bagdad, on the Euphrates or the Tigris. We believe the name Euphrates, however, to have a far broader meaning than the literal one, and to cover in its significance all the various phases of that struggle, during a period of six centuries at least, in which apostate Christendom suffered under that severest of all divine judgments, destructive wars; the most notable of these, as already shown, originating in a hostility to Christianity like that of Oriental heathenism to Israel, and waged with a like purpose—to destroy Christianity itself from the earth. Then the angels loosed are "four." So, one might say that the first Caliphs, recognized as true successors of Mohammed, were four—Abu Beker, Omar, Othman, and Ali. There were also four great teachers, Imams, corresponding to the Fathers of the primitive Christian age—Abu Hanifeh, Malek, Esh Shafy, and Hanbal. By these, four schools in theology were founded, which last until this day. No doubt, other like coincidences might be found. They should, perhaps, as in so many other cases noted in Apocalyptic interpretation, be treated as coincidences, and yet may be worthy of mention even so. We only add that such an event as the rise of Mohammedanism, by reason of its special relation to Christian history, could hardly fail of a place in an Apocalyptic scheme such as we are here following. And it is quite consistent with the Apocalyptic method that this great power appears on the scene as a mighty hostile force, seeking its own ends, yet used in the divine plan as an instrument of judgment upon an apostate church.

We must emphasize, as supporting the view we take of the vision under the sixth trumpet, what appears, in ver. 20, indicative of the divine purpose in the visitation described. "The rest of the men"—those who were not "killed"—"*repented not.*" We infer that to bring them to such repentance was the purpose of the "plague" sent upon them. The sins of which they were to repent, were those into which Christians under the apostasy, and especially those who represented the Christianity of that period—the rulers and teachers of the church—had fallen. The period we have been considering, had then, these two marked features—the corruption of Christianity, on the one hand, to such an extent as to make this apostasy comparable in many features to the idolatrous ones of ancient Israel, and upon the other hand, a wide and almost constant prevalence of devastating wars, with the

CHAPTER X.

miseries always attendant upon such. We are taught here, to see in the one, God's just judgment upon the other. Of this underlying divine philosophy history takes little or no account; prophecy makes it pre-eminent as a clue to the right interpretation of the record. The "men" so visited, however, "repented not." A primitive Christianity and a pure church were to be restored by other means. Of these, we now, in the chapter immediately following, are to learn.

THE STRONG ANGEL AND THE LITTLE BOOK.

The confusion among commentators with reference, especially, to the opening verses of this chapter, is even unusually great. Of all who have written upon it one can scarcely find any two who are agreed. To catalogue these various theories of interpretation for this portion of our book would only bewilder the reader, and afford very little help toward a right solution of the questions involved. We prefer to give our own view at once, placing such reference as may be needful to those of others in connection with the exposition we have to offer. As a preliminary to this exposition, it is important that we notice in what relation this chapter, and the one immediately following, are placed with those which precede and those which come after them. With the twelfth chapter, as we trust will appear when we come to study it, and as has already been explained, an entirely new series of visions begins, in which we are taken back to the opening of the Christian Dispensation, while in the succession of visions which follow, those aspects of the kingdom of God, in its earthly ordeal, which have already been presented in the seals and the trumpets, are renewed, although, as we shall see, in an entirely new system of symbols, and with new points of view. The ninth chapter has closed with the sounding of the sixth trumpet, and these two now to be studied—the tenth, and the eleventh as far as to ver. 15—are interposed between this sixth trumpet and the seventh. The six trumpets already studied, as explained in the "General Comments" at the close of the last chapter, we regard as covering the period from the fall of the Roman Empire, and the papal apostasy, to the Reformation, with particular reference to the confusions and the bloody wars of those dismal centuries. At the point now reached two *intercalary* chapters, as we may perhaps call them, are interposed. Upon this we copy a few words from Mr. Boyd Carpenter, in Ellicott's Commentary. He is speaking of the interposed visions after the opening of the sixth seal, and of those now in question. "The similarity of the situation," he says, "of these interposed visions (episodes, as they have not very accurately been called), suggests that there must be some corresponding value in their interpretation. This appears to be found in the answer to the question which rises spontaneously as the visions of the seals and the trumpets draw to a close. We see the scenes which the seals disclose, and we learn how war, pestilence, death, persecution, revolution, are to continue, and we ask: What becomes of the church, the bride of Christ? Where are the true servants of God during these trials? We are answered by the interposed visions of the seventh chapter, that they are sealed, and they will be safe. Similarly, the scenes disclosed by the trumpets are spread before us, and we see the features which mark the advance of Christianity in the world . . . and amid these confusions . . . we almost lose sight of the church, or gain only a few hints which show that she is not unharmed in the conflict; and again we ask: What becomes of the church, the bride of Christ? Where is her work and the tokens of her advance? To this the interposed visions of the present section [chapters tenth and eleventh] are designed to give an answer."

In the main we accept this view; only, we must assign to the tenth chapter another purpose in connection with this, and one quite as important. We shall hope that our exposition may make it clear that the appearance of the strong angel with the little book is *epochal* in its significance, serving not only to illustrate God's care of his people and his truth, even in the worst of times, but also to signalize a stage in the progress of his kingdom so important that it might almost be itself characterized as an era. To show this, with some of the inferences which follow, is the purpose of our exposition, in dealing with the opening verses of the chapter, especially.

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: [a] and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and [b] his face *was* as it were the sun, and [c] his feet as pillars of fire:

1 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a

a Ezek. 1: 28....*b* Matt. 17: 2; ch. 1: 16....*c* ch. 1: 15.

1-17. The Angel.

1. And I saw another mighty ["strong," ἰσχυρὸν] **angel come down from heaven.** "*Descending out of* heaven" would be a more literal rendering of the Greek. It seems unnecessary to attempt any precise determination of the question some commentators notice as to John's position, while the vision now to be described passes before him. We are not obliged to deal with the changing scenes of a vision as with actual occurrences. As Hengstenberg justly remarks, a latitude of conception is here to be allowed: "When the vision is seen on earth, he is on earth"—as in the wilderness (ch. 17: 3)—"but when the vision is in heaven, he is there." We should add that the Apocalyptic scene, as elsewhere explained, includes both earth and heaven, in the sense that the events and personages seen are sometimes in the one, sometimes in the other; sometimes, as here, passing between.—**Clothed with a cloud.** The cloud, according to Lange, "denotes, in general, the mysterious veiling of the divine and heavenly glory from the human eye on earth." Alford thinks that the cloud characterizes the angel "as a messenger of divine judgment." It does not seem at all clear, as we trust may be inferred from the exposition below, that the mission of the angel *is*, characteristically, one of "judgment"; but on the contrary. "Clouds," in general, when accompanying strictly divine manifestations, are, as we have noted elsewhere, symbols of the severer attributes of God's nature: as when it is said, "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and *judgment* are the habitation of his throne" (Ps. 97: 2). So, likewise, in a place in this book already commented upon (ch. 1: 7): "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The cloud at the Transfiguration, however (Matt. 17: 5), and the cloud which snatched Jesus from the sight of his disciples after the Ascension, have another meaning. They are not accompaniments and symbols of what is expressly divine, so much as veils "of the heavenly glory," to use Lange's words—making that glory more endurable to human sight. We so understand it here. The being who descends is a representative angelic one, not shining in the full splendor of heavenly brightness, but with a cloud "cast about him," as the word in the Greek imports.—**And a rainbow was upon his head.** "*The* rainbow" is a literal rendering. It is the covenant bow, worn as a crown by this "strong angel"; who comes, as we shall see, upon a mission connected with the fulfillment of covenant promise.—**And his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.** We trace here a resemblance to the description given of the Lord himself, as in ch. 1: 13, 16, where "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength," and "his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Are we to understand, then, that the angel in our present passage is Christ himself? It seems decisive against this that he is termed *another* angel, in which he is evidently classed, in general, with those that have been mentioned previously, and in particular with the "strong angel" mentioned in ch. 5: 2, who calls with the mighty voice for one to appear worthy to open the sealed book. As in these former instances, we must in consistency view that as simply one of those representative angelic forms which come successively upon the scene, each as representing some divine force, or purpose, or operation. In the present case, he represents the person and work of our Lord as Saviour and Sovereign, and the symbols which unite in him take form accordingly. Thus Ellicott: "Some call this the Angel of Time, because of his utterance in ver. 6; but is it not rather the typical representative of the angel of the New Testament, coming with the tokens of covenant truth, and power, and love?" His face shining as the sun reminds of what this same apostle elsewhere says of our Lord (John 1: 4): "In him was life: and the life was the *light* of men. And the light shineth in darkness."

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: [a] and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,

2 little book open: and he set his right foot upon

[a] Matt. 28: 18.

His feet, "as pillars of fire," tread the earth, says Ellicott, "strong in the power of purification and judgment"—for, as in wrath, God remembers mercy, so in mercy he does not forget the interests of righteousness.

2. And he had in his hand a little book open. In two respects this book differs from the sealed book mentioned in the fifth chapter: it is not *sealed*, but is "open," and it is a *little* book. In both these particulars it seems to be put in contrast with the book in the former place. In its nature and its purpose, therefore, it differs from the former one. Its contents are things already revealed, since it is "open"; and being a little book, it must relate to something so specific and condensed, that it may be thus briefly declared. Taken in the light of what appears further on, as will be shown, we think the "little book" should be viewed in some other light than as simply either the whole or "one portion," as Alford thinks, of that which the seer is to disclose "in his future prophesyings." The emphatic indication of its diminutiveness—the word used (βιβλαρίδιον), meaning a very small book, like what the French call a *brochure*—seems intended to suggest something significant in its character. If what is said above, besides, with reference to the twelfth chapter, be accepted, it seems impossible to connect what we trace here in any way with what appears there; nor would the symbol of a *little* book have any appropriateness in relation to such a variety of great and momentous events as those "future prophesyings" include. The opening of the twelfth chapter takes us back to "the beginning of the gospel." The closing verse of the eleventh reads like the close to a series of visions, all the parts of which round out within that limit to a complete whole. From the twelfth chapter on, we have an entirely new system of visions, upon a wholly new plan, and related to these now occupying us only in the most general way. We cannot see reason for including them in any way in the contents of "the little book." We take it, in fact, that the symbolical significance of this appearance of the angel with the book belongs mainly to this tenth chapter, and is to be interpreted in that connection.—**And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.** Various fanciful expositions have been proposed here: as by Bengel, that the sea and land denote Europe and Asia; and by Hengstenberg, "the sea of peoples, and the cultivated world." De Wette's view is better—that the tidings brought by the angel are for the whole earth. The action is certainly significant, and may help us in gaining a more correct idea of the mission of the angel and the symbolism of the little book. The planting of one foot on the sea and one on the land, seems like a taking possession of both in the interest of this mission; so, likewise, whatever the book imports must be of world-wide significance and value. Lange understands the little book to be "the book of the world's end, the revelation of the events of the approaching end of the world." He thinks its contents are relatively reflected "in the everlasting gospel" (ch. 14: 6), which the angel flying in the midst of heaven has it in charge to "preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." It is, indeed, deserving of notice, how much what we have quoted from ch. 14 resembles the language of ver. 11 in our present chapter, where it is said to John, after he has received and eaten the little book: "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Viewing the contents of the book, here, as "relatively" the same as the message of the angel in ch. 14: 6, and similarly world-wide in their value and application, Lange thinks that the setting of the angel's feet on the sea and on the land denotes, "not simply and in general his [Christ's] power over the whole earth; but also, particularly, his power over the two opposite forms of its spiritual life—earth and sea; theocracy and world." As the reader may infer from this, Lange recognizes in the "strong angel" our Lord himself, and hence perceives in the symbolism of the action now considered, that element of world-wide dominion. We prefer, as already

3 And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, [a]seven thunders uttered their voices.
4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, [b]Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

3 the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when he
4 cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered *their voices*, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders

[a] ch. 8: 5....[b] Dan. 8: 26; 12: 4, 9.

explained, to view the angel as *representative* of our Lord. His action may symbolize dominion; but we find its chief significance in what, as we shall explain presently, we regard as the contents of the book in his hand. Whether "sea" and "land" are here to be taken in the symbolical sense indicated by Lange, we are not sure. The natural interpretation of the angel's action is as an indication that his mission and message are of world-wide moment, and are to be world-wide in their effect.

3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth. The lion-voice is suitable to him who, in the vision, represents in symbol "the Lion of the Tribe of Juda." The Speaker's Commentary thinks that a "menacing tone in the voice is thus indicated"; Ebrard, that the voice, with lion-like tone, is a signal to the seven thunders which immediately follow.—**When he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.** These thunders, says the Speaker's Commentary, "issue, as it were, from the cloud which veils the angel, and are the echo of his lion-voice." The thunders, however, are not simply an "echo"; they are themselves vocal, and have an utterance of their own. Things are spoken in these thunder-tones which John at first understands as intended for record.

4. When the seven thunders had uttered their voices [or, "had spoken"], **I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.** We find here an intimation that in the intervals of the visions, throughout, John was engaged in writing down the things seen and heard. It was, therefore, more or less in his trance-like state that even the writing of the book was done—a circumstance which explains many of its peculiarities. In the present case he is forbidden to write what the thunders had uttered; he is commanded to "seal up" the things spoken, and write them not—to treat them, that is, as things reserved and secret. Questions offer themselves as to the reason of this injunction, as well as the import of the utterances themselves, which cannot, perhaps, be answered. There must have been a purpose in the utterance, and a purpose also in the command not to write. The former, probably, concerned John himself; the latter, those for whom his book is written. The thunders appear to have been a part of that scenic symbolism by which the appearance of the angel was accompanied. They were a divine attestation of his mission; and for John seem to have conveyed something as to the *import* of that mission which it was not permitted him to disclose. The only place in the New Testament where anything is found that may help in our explanation is in another of John's own writings, the twelfth chapter of his Gospel. We there read (ver. 28–33) of the voice from heaven in response to the appeal of Jesus in presence of the multitude assembled "at the feast," and of which the people "that stood by and heard it said that it thundered; others said, An angel spake to him." What our Lord says of it is: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." And then he exclaims, as if to some extent interpreting the thunder-voice they had just heard: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." The words of the voice from heaven which the people had so indistinctly heard, were a response to the Lord's appeal, "Father, glorify thy name." The response was: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." There is something of helpful suggestion in all this, when put in connection with our present passage. The thunder-voice heard as the angel descends, is like that voice from heaven which the people heard on that day, and which testified in their presence to the character and

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth [a] lifted up his hand to heaven,

5 uttered, and write them not. And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth

[a] Ex. 6: 8; Dan. 12: 7.

mission of him who stood before them. These were actual utterances—words spoken, on this occasion as on that, and doubtless now as then, having reference to the mission of him whose person and office are thus recognized; with this difference, however, that while our Lord interpreted the utterance, John is commanded to keep it secret. On the occasion mentioned in the Gospel, the voice from heaven, so majestic and overaweing, signalized the near approach of an event momentous in the highest degree—the lifting up from the earth of him who as thus lifted up was to draw all men unto himself; the consummation, in other words, of the Redeemer's earthly work in his death upon the cross as the world's Saviour, and his subsequent ascension to the right hand of the Father. To this Jesus had previously made allusion in saying: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." We take the utterance of the seven thunders in the vision now under consideration, as similar in its significance. The thunders signalize an epoch in the history of God's kingdom on earth; they announce new and great changes in the divine procedure as regards his kingdom, and as regards the world of men. The unfolding of the Apocalyptic scheme has now reached a point where the affairs of the world and of the church *in* the world, are about to take on a new aspect. The scene is about to change. As the sixth trumpet-vision, in which so much has been seen of God's righteous judgment upon apostate Christendom, passes from the field of view, suddenly appears a form resplendent in the glory of that covenanting grace which God, after all, has not forgotten; while above even the tumult of the world's disorder a voice sounds, announcing in its tone the world-wide momentousness of the events that now are drawing near. It is as when, at the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, "there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." Only, now it is gospel, not law, that is to be proclaimed; though a gospel which involves, with blessings for the believing and the true, judgments upon a world lying in wickedness. The number "seven," is to be treated as in so many other places in this book. Fanciful interpretations have here, also, been put forth, as by Daubeuz, quoted in the Speaker's Commentary, who understands "the seven kingdoms that received the Reformation," and by Elliott, the papal Bull fulminated against Luther from the seven-hilled city; and by Vitringa, "the seven Crusades." Such interpretations change to what Carpenter justly calls "a bald literalism," the sublime symbolism of the passage. It is possible that the "seven" here has some reference to that seven-fold repetition of "the voice of the Lord" in Psalm twenty-nine, upon which the Jews founded their custom of speaking of the thunder as "the seven voices of the Lord." This seems, however, like a rather far-fetched suggestion. The "seven" may be only that use of the word so frequent in denoting what is perfect in its kind, and may allude, simply, to the loudness and majesty of the tone.

5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. "The angel whom I saw standing," would be good English by present usage, and a good rendering of the Greek participle. There is a passage in Daniel (12: 6, 7) of which this one reminds us. "The man clothed in linen" is inquired of: How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? and he "held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half." The gesture described in both these passages, as belonging to solemn asseveration, or the oath, is evidently very ancient. Abraham says (Gen. 14: 22) to the king of Sodom, and alluding to the spoils taken from the defeated kings: "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet," etc. The attitude and gesture of the angel in our present passage, lend wonderful emphasis to the weighty words he speaks.

6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, [a]who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, [b]that there should be time no longer:
7 But [c]in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

6 lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth [1]for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, [2]and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be
7 [3]delay no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the proph-

a Neh. 9:6; ch. 4:11; 14:7....b Dan. 12:7; ch. 16:17....c ch. 11:15.—1 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*—2 Some ancient authorities omit, *and the sea and the things that are therein*....3 Or, *time.*

6. And sware by him that liveth forever and ever. . . . that there should be time no longer. Many have supposed—and probably most of those who have not given to this passage particular consideration—that this announces the absolute end of time; a construction of its meaning which is the occasion of much difficulty in explaining what follows. It is nearly agreed among later commentators, so far as we have observed, that the Greek word, here translated "time" (χρόνος), should be taken in its less specific sense of "delay," or "continuance." The Greek, were it the purpose of the passage to announce the absolute end of time, taking the word "time" in its usual sense, would require the article (ὁ χρόνος). The absence of the article suggests that the other, less definite meaning, is the one to be here given to the word. The revised version, as will be seen, translates "delay." This, while consistent with Greek usage, as just explained, suits far better the general context of the passage. In ver. 11, for example, it is said to John, "Thou must prophesy again, before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"; consistently with which we can scarcely understand the angel to be here announcing, absolutely, the end of time, even though deferring that event till the seventh angel sounds. The giving of the little book, with all that occurs in the connection, clearly implies that there is much yet to transpire before the end shall come. There seems a propriety in connecting the declaration of the angel, "There shall be delay no longer," with ch. 6:11, where, to the souls under the altar, it is said, that "they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled." These words, as we noticed in commenting on the passage, plainly imply an interval of trial and suffering then still to follow, during which the church should be in its ordeal, and persecution still rage against the Lord's true people. The call for "vengeance," as we also saw, expresses simply that wonder at God's seeming delays in times of trial for his people which is so natural to men, and at the apparent slowness with which he "arises to judge the earth." The answer given shows that the divine purpose acts by a divine plan; that at the fit time God will "avenge his own elect," by appearing in their behalf and in behalf of all interests of truth and righteousness, in such a way as to vindicate both. Meantime, the ordeal must last. The trumpets have ushered upon the Apocalyptic scene visions of the various forms which this ordeal should assume. These have now brought the unfolding of events down to the point where the fulfillment of promise shall begin. "There shall be delay no longer." The striking and impressive recital of divine attributes, in the solemn adjuration of the angel, lends great force to this declaration. It is the ever-living, the mighty, the faithful God who thus declares, through the lips of his messenger-angel, his purpose to *now* fulfill that which was promised.

7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. Some important changes in translation are needful here. The revision, as will be seen, gives the verse thus: "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets." Ellicott translates, "*was* finished." Alford, like the revision, "*is* finished." The word rendered in the common version "declared" (εὐηγγελίσεν), means *to announce glad tidings;* and is, with its derivatives, used for preaching the gospel, as in 1 Pet. 1:25; Luke 3:18, where the verb is so employed; and in both Mark and Luke,

8 And [a]the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 ets. And the voice that I heard from heaven, *I heard it* again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that

[a] ver. 4.

and other places, the noun, allied with it, (εὐαγγέλιον), is used with the Greek verb to "announce," "proclaim" (κηρύσσω). The verb is used here with the accusative of the person. Alford accordingly translates, literally, "as he *evangelized* his servants, the prophets"; for the reason, as he states it, that "it is impossible to translate by a periphrasis without losing its force." He adds: "It expresses that God *informed them* [the prophets] of the glad tidings"; it being understood, he says, that as prophets they published the good news (εὐαγγέλιον). "Evangelized," however, is a word which in such a connection scarcely carries any meaning at all. The periphrasis is a necessity, while the loss of force in its use is not apparent, to us at least, as it seems to be to the commentator just named. We prefer, therefore, the periphrastic rendering of the revisers: "according to the glad tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets." What *is* this "glad tidings"? It must be that same thing which is implied in the phrase: "the mystery of God." This, as declared to his servants the prophets, shall now be fulfilled. We take it to be that "mystery," that secret purpose of God, from time to time intimated, "declared," although never fully unfolded, to the holy men in different ages whom he has made the medium of his communication with the world. It is that ultimate purpose, that divine idea, by which we have reason to believe the whole scheme of human history is controlled. In all the ages of this history God's dispensations have been adjusted to a grand, ultimate design, of which intimations are given in all those passages that imply the ultimate triumph of his truth, and the final overthrow of error, evil, and all the miseries and mischiefs that come upon the race through sin; in other words, the final victory and universal prevalence of his own kingdom of righteousness and grace. The sounding of the seventh trumpet will usher in the accomplishment of this design. Then shall be fulfilled the glorious prophecies which gleam along the track of human destiny, a light shining more and more unto the perfect day. Then shall the prayer of the souls under the altar be answered; and while the Redeemer sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, those who have been with him in the temptation, have drank of his cup, and been baptized with his baptism, shall be satisfied also. In what this fulfillment consists, must be shown further on. Only, here let us remark that it is the angel with *the little book* in his hand who proclaims this "finishing" of "the mystery of God."

8-11. THE LITTLE BOOK.

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said. The corrected translation is: "And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again, speaking with me, and saying." It is the voice which had just commanded him to "seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered."—**Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.** Here emerges another important point of difference between what is said of the sealed book, in the fifth chapter, and what is said of the little book in the angel's hand. It is "the Lamb" who in the former case opens the seals. It is John himself to whom this other book is given. The instrumentality in the one case is divine, in the other it is human. This circumstance alone indicates a marked difference between the two books, as respects their nature, their contents, and the symbolical significance of each. Some writers understand by the little book, as Dr. Vaughan expresses it, "the word of the coming prophecy: even of the prophecies which are to follow in subsequent chapters of the book." Hengstenberg says: "The [sealed] book contains the judgments on the world; the little book, the destinies of the church." Even, however, if it should be admitted that Hengstenberg's explanation of the difference between the two books as to size—that, namely, "the sins and punishments of the world constitute matter of a much more comprehensive nature than those of the church,"—which, in

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, [a]Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.
10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; [b]and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, [c]my belly was bitter.

9 standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter,
10 and in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

a Jer. 15 : 16; Ezek. 2 : 8; 3 : 1, 2, 3....*b* Ezek. 3 : 3....*c* Ezek. 2 : 10.

point of fact, at least to the extent implied, is open to doubt—even if this were admitted, there remains the question why the instrument for disclosing the contents of the one should be necessarily divine, while that for the other is human. The universe, in the former case, was searched in vain for one less in dignity than the Lamb himself "worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof"; in the latter case it is John, the man and the apostle, who is commanded to take the book out of the hand of the angel. This circumstance seems clearly to point to the fact that the office now to be discharged is quite other than that indicated in the former instance, when the Lamb alone is found a fit medium for revealing to men the secret purposes of God; and that this difference in office is occasioned by a difference in the very nature and contents of this one book from those of the other. We look upon John, as he receives the command to "go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel," as representing in the vision human instrumentality of an important kind, employed in a sphere appropriate to such, and connected with a fulfillment of divine purpose vitally concerning alike the church and the world, yet differing, in part, at least, from that of a prophetic disclosure of things to come. The book in the angel's hand is "open," not, like the other, "sealed." It is a message to be published, a doctrine to be taught, a word of God revealed, and so given into human hands, as ver. 11 in this chapter imports, for world-wide diffusion. For the first time John himself appears in the vision other than as a beholder. He himself now becomes for the moment a representative actor on the scene. In his person, as he goes forward to receive the book, is symbolized, along with what belongs to him in his prophetic character, the whole company of those who in the world's later ages were to proclaim the old gospel in its new simplicity, and its new and yet more amazing power.

9. And I went unto the angel. Let it be kept in mind that John here acts as in a vision, so that what follows—for example, the eating of the roll, or book—must not be received as requiring to be explained by the laws that govern actual events.—**And said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter; but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.** The Alexandrine manuscript reads, "make thy *heart* bitter." This reading, if adopted, might in some degree, in one way, relieve the chief difficulty of the passage. The revisers, however, have not preferred it; and, notwithstanding the manuscript authority is so great, it is perhaps safer to let the common reading stand. In favor of the latter, critically viewed, is the fact that so the consistency of the symbolism is preserved. It might seem incongruous to associate in the same symbolical representation, a *physical* effect, like the sweetness in the mouth, and a *spiritual* effect such as is implied in the bitterness of the heart. The eating of the book, or the "roll"—for, of course, the form of the book, as of all books, anciently, was that of a roll—reminds us, at once, of the passage in Ezekiel (3 : 1-3): "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest: eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth: and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then I did eat it: and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." In the fourteenth verse of the same chapter, however, after he had received his commission to declare the word of the Lord to the house of Israel, and had been informed in what manner it would be received, he tells us: "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went *in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit;* but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me." The more ancient record may help us to explain the later one.

10. And I took the little book out of

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

11 And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again [1]over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

1 Or, *concerning*.

the angel's hand, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. One point of difference we note. In the account in Ezekiel, we have what describes visions alternating with accounts of what the prophet said and did in his normal state. In the book we are studying, all is vision. In the former case, accordingly, the bitterness and heat of spirit is an actual experience, and is felt while actually engaged in the delivery of the prophetic message, and while encountering the hard-hearted indifference, or mocking unbelief of those to whom the prophet was sent. In the latter case, the bitterness, as well as the sweetness, belongs to the vision; and the two occur so nearly together that they are experienced as in any other case where food pleasant to the taste is soon after felt as a cause of suffering. Yet we must observe that in this almost momentary symbolical action of the vision is compressed, as in numerous other instances that might be pointed out, what represents a very wide, and various, and long-continued experience. How often those to whom the gospel message, before other messages more strictly prophetic in character, was committed, have found what was sweet and precious in personal experience an occasion of sorrow, trial, temptation, and indeed keenest pangs of suffering while communicating it to others, is a familar fact.

11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. Following the Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts, we should translate, "And *they* said unto me." Alford, Carpenter, and the revisers thus translate: "An equivalent," says the second, for "It was said." Instead of "before," also, the preposition (ἐπί) is translated, it will be observed, "over," with "concerning" in the margin; the same expositors translate, "concerning (or with regard to) peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings many." As to the nature of this "prophecy," we cannot agree with the eminent scholars whom we have just named. The words, "prophesy" and "prophet," as is well known, are used in Scripture with a wider meaning than simply that of the foretelling of future events. They are used, also, in the sense of "teach," "teacher," especially in some of Paul's Epistles; and, as there is reason to believe, expressed, alike in New Testament and in Old Testament times, utterances of whatever kind under special influence of the Spirit. Consistently with this usage, it seems entirely proper to understand the word, here, as meaning, not strictly, at least not exclusively, the foretelling of things to come, but the delivery of divine messages, by divine authority, and with divine power attending and manifest. It should be remembered, also, that John, in receiving and eating the little roll, acts precisely as all other personages introduced in these successive visions do—representatively, and as symbolizing far more than concerned himself individually. Yet if the words addressed to him, "Thou must again prophesy," are understood as meaning that he had other visions to write, he seems, in such an exposition, taken suddenly out of his symbolical and representative position, and viewed in his character as the seer and Apocalyptist. We prefer to view him, as in this whole vision of the roll, as acting *out of* quite as much as *in* his character as the medium of these revelations, and as representing in a large sense that ministry to which he himself, as an apostle, belonged—though now exhibited in the later scenes of its activity—and hearing anew the message which had been so long lost to mankind. We take the Greek preposition (ἐπ.), however translated, as indicating that the tenor of this message will deeply concern all those of whom mention is made—the "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." This ministry is to be a comprehensive one. The time has come when the gospel message will not only be delivered in the unencumbered simplicity of its original announcement, but when in many "tongues" it shall be heard, when "nations" shall be "born" under its

regenerative efficacy, and when for "peoples" and "kings" it shall have messages of tremendous import.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

Many things necessary, perhaps, to the exposition of this chapter which we have now offered, we have preferred to leave for consideration in this connection. The pivotal point in the whole is that which concerns the symbolism of the little book. The angel descends from heaven that he may place this little book in the hands of the seer. All other incidents of the vision, however striking in themselves, are to be viewed as in subordination to this central one. The book itself is a symbol, and all that transpires in connection with it has symbolical significance. It is not a book to be read; but to be *eaten*. What it contains must first become an *experience*, and then be *communicated;* for it is after he has eaten the roll, that it is said to John: "Thou must prophesy." The diminutiveness of the book, as already intimated, is in like manner symbolical, as is also the fact that it is seen lying, an open roll, on the angel's hand. This "open" state of the roll harmonizes with what is said by the angel of the finishing of "the mystery of God," while its diminutiveness indicates it as a word of God in perfect contrast with the voluminousness of mere human utterance, and in a reduction of what had before been extended, complicated, and hard to understand, to conciseness and simplicity.

In order that we may rightly interpret the symbolism of the book, we must associate with it that of the vision as a whole. There is much in the appearance and language of the angel himself, that may be helpful to this end. He comes with the covenant-bow, worn as a crown; suggesting that his mission must have a connection with the fulfillment of covenant divine promise. His countenance shining as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, remind us of the Lord's own glorious appearance to John in the beginning of these visions, and suggest that what is now declared has some especial relation to his great redeeming work. His attitude, one foot on the sea and one on the earth, with his words to John, intimating that the contents of the book are for "peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," seems like an anticipation of the flight of that other angel, in ch. 15, through the midst of heaven, with the everlasting gospel for the whole world of men. The announcement that there shall be delay no longer; but that now what had remained a mystery even to the most favored of God's prophets and servants of a former time shall be "finished"—shall be wrought out in divine fulfillments—bids us look for what shall be a consummation of the great divine plan, and the full accomplishment of divine purpose. All these indications are, to our own mind, *epochal* in character. While they cannot mean a final end of the Dispensation, even in connection with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, nor the end of the world—since the delivering of messages to "peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" implies the continuation of time and of the day of salvation—yet they do suggest that some great and important stage in the dispensations of God toward the church and the world has been reached. May it not be that the period of the world's history in which we ourselves are now living, is that in which the symbolism of the little book is finding practical elucidation? It is a time of world-wide diffusion of the gospel message in the simplicity and power of its original announcement. It is a time in which the Lord's people are permitted to see what kings and prophets once "longed to see, yet died without the sight." What we are accustomed to term the Reformation, was in reality, a *Revolution;* what we are apt to interpret as a transition, was in truth an era. The leading fact in the mighty change that has come upon the world, is that now the gospel addresses men stripped of the disguise which it was so long made to wear, and announces a method of salvation "easy, artless, unencumbered." The re-affirmation of one doctrine—that of justification by faith—has reduced to merely learned lumber whole libraries of scholastic lore; while above all, setting aside such an immensity of Romanist teaching and practice based on the opposite doctrine of salvation by "the deeds of the body." When men began to understand, once more, that they are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves, since "it is the gift of God," the whole legal system of the apostasy began to crumble; while, as one may say, just in the preaching

of that one truth, the face of the world was changed.

But this does not exhaust the symbolism of the little book. The gospel is not simply a plan of salvation. It is besides a grand scheme of divine administration for the church and for the world. In ages past it has, in this view, been a "mystery." How difficult it must have been in those ages to understand many things now very plain to the thoughtful student of God's word and God's providence! How strange and inexplicable, to Israel, must its own history have seemed! How true was that admonition of the Saviour to his own disciples, "It is not for you to know"! How much does the cry of the souls under the altar express of the wonder, almost the despair, of God's faithful ones during ages of apparent defeat for them and their cause, and of apparent triumph for a bloody and blaspheming foe! "*Mystery!*" Truly it was that. But has not the mystery now for a long period been clearing up? If we put all that was dark and disturbing to faith in the past centuries in the light of the more bright and hopeful present, do not obscurities, perplexities, and doubts clear away, as clouds before the sun? Much of this, also, we find symbolized in the little book. This declaring, unfolding of the mystery of God as regards the whole of time, past, present, and future, is itself a "prophecy," a teaching "concerning peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

And then, we may infer from it how the prophecies of old time are in this new age hastening to their fulfillment. So far as the words, "Thou must prophesy again" are to be understood literally, it is a prophecy of "the time of the end." Not voluminous, like the older prophecies, but such as when the consummation draws on; the events of years are compressed within those of an hour, development is swift, things rush to their climax, the plowman overtakes the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed.

The eating of the little book, with the effects that follow, ought to have, in our commentary, more than a passing mention. The incident, to a hasty consideration, may seem strange—for how can a book be *eaten?* Yet if it is borne in mind that what is related here is vision, and not actual occurrence, and if it is remembered how in visions, as in dreams, the laws that govern actual events are often transcended—as in fact is done when in the very commencement of these disclosures the seer, without regard to bodily presence, is transferred to the spiritual sphere, and then beholds what to physical organs is wholly veiled and invisible—we shall readily admit that the incident now noticed is not at all to be tried by ordinary rules. It is, as we have noticed in other connections, pure vision and symbol. Yet even as such, its significance is especially to be marked. Three features of the whole incident, as we study it, become conspicuous: (1) That the book is given into *human hands*, and this with a view to communication of its contents through human instrumentality—a very wide communication: "to peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"; (2) That as thus received the book first becomes in its contents and substance, *a personal experience;* (3) That while in personal experience at first "sweet," the book as a further effect, or, as an effect of the ministry involved in its communication, brings "bitterness." The explanation of this is found in facts of personal and general Christian history. Even the personal experiences of a Christian involve more or less of the element here implied. That experience is for him a revelation of himself *to* himself. All that he finds in his Redeemer, and in that gift of God which comes through him, is, indeed, unmixed blessing. The alloy comes in through the continued presence and activity of sin, and through the painful sense he has of imperfection in every kind of attainment. There is a conflict remaining to him in this world, which makes it impossible that even the blessedness of present Christian comfort and peace should be a final blessedness. But the personal experience of a Christian is not all that is realized to him as a result of his appropriation of the "little book." John has no sooner received it and appropriated it, than it is said to him, "Thou must prophesy." He must bear as a message to others that which the book has become to him. And herein he will find fulfilled that word of the Saviour, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The symbolism of our present passage, therefore, would have presented only a part of the truth if it had indicated alone that in Christian experience, received as a whole, which is "sweet." A Christian in the world *must* have

CHAPTER XI.

AND there was given me [a] a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, [b] Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

1 AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: [1] and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and

[a] Ezek. 40: 3, etc.; Zech. 2: 1; ch. 21: 15....[b] Num. 23: 18.—1 Gr. *saying.*

trials and sorrows peculiar to him as such, and the "little book," sweet to the taste, a precious gift, worthy to come even from an angel's hand, will not only bring with it the salutary bitterness which belongs, needfully, to the most favored human condition in this world of sin and temptation, but will also as *a message* become an occasion of other forms of trial; in some cases it has been the occasion of suffering whose bitterness only the grace of God could make endurable.

When it is said to John, "Thou must prophesy *again*," evident allusion is included to the prophetic office he has already fulfilled in the process of these visions, and to the trying nature of these prophecies. Thus there appears to be a connection in thought here with the "bitterness" mentioned in the previous verse. Even in the new era that now dawns, the message of the prophet will be in many ways sorrowful, whether that message be simple proclamation of saving truth, or a foretelling of things to come. There will be a "sweetness" in this office as fulfilled in the better times now at hand; yet human nature and human history do not suddenly change, and what concerns "peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," will be in many things but the old sad story.

THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

1-2. THE MEASUREMENT OF THE TEMPLE.

1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod. In Ezekiel (40: 1-3), and in Zechariah (2: 1, 2), we have what may be, to some extent, illustrative of these opening words of a new chapter, introducing a new series of visions. In Ezekiel, the prophet is met by a man "with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed." These were for the measurement of the temple, in its various parts, symbolizing thus the divine order and proportion of that spiritual temple of which the material temple was a type. The "man with a measuring line in his hand," seen by Zechariah, goes forth to measure Jerusalem itself, "to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof." The reason of this is explained in the fifth verse of the chapter: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire, round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." This measurement of the city was a symbol of protection, marking out the "metes and bounds" within which God should have his own especial dwelling, while to those abiding there with him, peace and safety should be made sure. The prophetic method here used is again employed in the imagery of our present passage. It is another example of the manner in which the symbolism of the older Dispensation is reproduced in the Apocalypse of the New. The measuring reed, here, is "like a rod," or staff (ῥάβδῳ). Bishop Wordsworth, quite too fancifully, makes this reed, or rod, a symbol of "the Scripture," and views the rod as a "rod of iron," like that mentioned in ch. 2: 27. "It measures," he says, "like a reed, yet is not frail and quivering as a reed . . . a rod of *iron*, which cannot be bent or broken, but will break its foes in pieces, like a potter's vessel." There is, surely, nothing of all this in the passage itself.—**And the angel stood.** This must be thrown out in the translation. There is no good authority for the words, and in all the later revisions they are omitted.—**Saying, Rise and measure the temple of God.** The Sinaitic manuscript has, "he saith," or "one saith" (λέγει), instead of "saying" (λέγων). The text given by Westcott and Hort, in their scholarly recension, retains the latter form. The revised version translates, as will be seen, "one said." Wordsworth, retaining the participle and translating literally, reads, "And there was given me a reed, like unto a rod, saying, Rise and measure," etc. He then makes, upon the verse, this singular comment: "The reed speaks. It is inspired. The Spirit is in it. It is the word of God. And it measures the church: the Canon of Scripture is the rule of faith." Something like this, also,

2 But [a]the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; [b]for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they [c]tread under foot [d]forty *and* two months.

2 the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple [1]leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under

a Ezek. 40: 17, 20....b Ps. 79: 1; Luke 21: 24....c Dan. 8: 10....d ch. 13: 5.—1 Gr. *cast without.*

is Bengel's idea. Alford and Ellicott take the form of the expression as simply one of those peculiarities of construction not uncommon in this book, and purposely made indefinite. In order to make good English, it seems necessary to render somewhat paraphrastically, as in fact the revision appears to do, making the clause stand, "and one said." The person speaking is not indicated, neither is it intimated by whom the reed is given. A personal element, however, comes in at ver. 3, where the voice speaking, says: "*I* will give power unto *my* two witnesses." If we were to guide ourselves by this alone, we might conclude that it is the Lord himself who speaks. The allusion in the eighth verse to the crucifixion of the Lord may be thought to interpose a difficulty. We may say, however, that quite clearly the voice which speaks is either that of Christ, or that of one who, like the "strong angel" in ch. x., represents him. Upon the significance given to the command to "measure the temple of God," much depends. We must keep in mind that in the Greek there are two words for "temple"—(ἱερόν and ναός). Of these two words, Ellicott says that the former signifies the whole compass of the temple enclosure, including the outer courts, porches, porticoes, and other buildings subordinated to the temple itself; while the latter denotes "the temple itself, the house of God, the holy of holies." The word used here is the latter (ναός). What is meant, therefore, in this place by the temple, is that inner, most sacred portion of the building, which was especially known as "the sanctuary," and which enshrined those types of better things to come that were themselves so sacred and so precious. What is implied in this symbolism will be noticed directly.—**And the altar.** Does this mean the altar of incense simply? Or is it intended to include with this the altar of burnt-offering as well, standing just without the holy place? Alford thinks we need not be "too minute in particularizing." Ellicott says that "the explicit direction to measure the altar sounds like an extension of the measured area, and may mean that some portion of the court reserved for Israel is to be included in the measurement." This, in fact, may seem to be implied in what follows. For the measurement is to include the temple, the altar, **and them that worship therein.** Adjoining the Holy Place, in the ancient temple, was the Court of Israel, where the altar of burnt-offering stood, and where the worshipers chiefly congregated. Ellicott's caution that we do not seek "to settle too definitely," is judicious. It is enough, as he says, "that everything necessary to the worship—temple, altar, worshipers—all are reserved." There seems no reason why we should attempt the determination of more than this.

2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not. The word used (ἔκβαλε) has a stronger meaning than simply leave out; "*cast out,*" is its more exact signification. The idea seems to be that this outer court, thus left unmeasured, is to be regarded as something profane, and in strong contrast with that inner sanctuary so preferred, as the whole direction given implies. The significance of this will appear when we come to notice more fully the meaning and intention of this act of "measuring." —**For it is given unto the Gentiles.** The word, "Gentiles," is not used here in its literal sense, but in a symbolical one, as is the case with Babylon, Jerusalem, and with the word Israel, even. By the temple, in this passage, we understand that which in the typical system of the Old Dispensation, the ancient temple—the inner temple (ναός) especially—always prefigured; that is to say, the church of God, in its high spiritual sense. The worshipers, here, are they that worship God "in spirit and in truth"; they are the true Israel. The "Gentiles" are they who are not of this true Israel; those who, whatever may be their profession, hold in truth, and really, the same attitude toward God's true people as the hostile Gentile world in the more ancient times held.—**And the holy city**

3 And I will give *power* unto my two [a]witnesses, [b]and they shall prophesy [c]a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

3 foot forty and two months. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in

a ch. 20: 4....b ch. 19: 10....c ch. 12: 6.

shall they tread under foot. Carrying out the symbolism of the temple, it is viewed as if, like the ancient, literal, temple, it had in its environment a city which is in some sort identified with it. It is as if the courts so left out of the measurement broaden away so as to take in the whole city. These "Gentiles"—persons possessed of the Gentile spirit, worldly, corrupt, hostile to all true religion and to the true Israel—throng, not only the outer court, but the city; and in their rudeness and violence "tread it under foot," as the Gentile enemy, Assyrian, Babylonian, Roman, were wont to tread down Jerusalem itself, when they had forced their way in.—**Forty and two months.** We reserve, for the present, what we are to say of this indication of a period during which the treading under foot shall last.

Gathering up, now, what has appeared in the course of our exposition, thus far, we take the measuring in this place as similar in its symbolical significance, to the measuring mentioned in Zechariah, as noted above, and so to the sealing described in ch. 7: 3. The servants of God are in the latter place spoken of as sealed in their forehead—made to bear a mark, or token, thus conspicuously, in order that they might be known as the servants of God, and be kept safe amidst the calamities about to come upon the world. In the present case, however, the Lord's true people are viewed, not so much *individually*, as in the former one, but more in their organic, or at least their *collective* capacity as the true church of God. Their separation from, not only the world, but from what is corrupt and evil in the nominal church itself, and their security under divine protection, are now to be indicated. They appear in the Apocalyptic vision under the symbol of that sanctuary —the Holy and the Holy of Holies—which in ancient times forshadowed in expressive type the true church of God. These are that true church. But the symbolical act of sealing, applied to an individual, loses its significance if applied to a temple. The more suitable form of the act is a *measuring*, a setting apart of that portion of the whole building which is sacred and safe. The procedure described, then, sets forth the truth that even when the great body of the nominal church becomes corrupt, ruled by the Gentile spirit, in its real nature profane and vile, there is still a true church, surviving and safe, "kept by the power of God, through faith." The measuring of the altar—meaning, alike, it should seem, the altar of incense and the altar of burnt-offering—implies that those matters of faith which the altar sets forth in type—the blood of atonement, shed for the remission of sins, the intercession of the Great High Priest, efficacious prayer, borne heavenward on the wings of that intercession and made acceptable because perfumed by the incense of prevailing mediation—these and other verities of faith are sheltered by the same act of consecrating separation, and survive, even amidst general corruption, and whatever the tumult raging without. The general idea here, therefore, is the same that meets us elsewhere—in the hundred and forty and four thousand of the sealed, described in chapter seven, and the same number as they appear with the Lamb on Mount Zion (ch. 14: 1), "having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Only, here, these "called, and chosen, and faithful" are seen as the church within the church, the Holy of Holies (ναός) within the temple (ἱερόν), the pure and true "remnant," surviving amidst general apostasy and corruption. For where it is said of those without that they shall tread the holy city under foot, it is implied that with these is the multitude, and with those who worship in the "sanctuary" are the faithful few.

3–13. The Two Witnesses.

3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses. The literal rendering would be: "I will give to my two witnesses." The word for "power" is not in the Greek; but it seems to be implied. The variety of interpretations given to the passage we are now to take up, is almost bewildering. And, indeed, the identifying of these two witnesses is a matter of no little difficulty. Wordsworth understands by the witnesses the two great parts of Scripture—the Old and New Testaments. Lange regards them as the Christian

4 These are the [a] two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth.

4 sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two [1] candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the

[a] Ps. 52:8; Jer. 11:16; Zech. 4:3, 11, 14.—[1] Gr. *lampstands.*

Church and the Christian State. Stuart, who treats the whole of this part of the book as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, regards what is said here of the two witnesses, as setting forth in symbol "that God would raise up faithful and well-endowed preachers among the Jews at the period when the nation were ready to perish; that those preachers would be persecuted and destroyed; and after all that the Christian cause would still be triumphant." The two witnesses have also been variously identified with Christ and John the Baptist, with St. Francis and St. Dominick, heads of the two great orders of monks; with John Huss and Luther, with the Waldenses and the Albigenses, with the Law and the Gospel, with Jewish and Gentile Christians, etc. Alford declines all attempt at identification. Carpenter's remark, in Ellicott, is: "The two witnesses stand as the typical representatives of those who, in the strength of God, have, through long ages, borne witness for Christ against all wrong and falsehood, against a world in arms or a church in error, or against a nominal Christianity in danger of becoming as corrupt and as cruel as heathenism. Such witnesses stand, like the two columns, Jachin and Boaz, before the true temple of God." In studying the passage for ourselves, we prefer to notice first the several parts of it, with the details of description given, and to state our own impression of its meaning in a final summary. The reason for the view we take may thus, perhaps, be more clearly and fully presented. —**And they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth.** Assuming that the prophetic day, here, means a year, we have in the 1260 days the same number of years as in the forty-two months named above—42×30=1260. We do not discuss here the question of identity in these two periods, reserving that point, again, for consideration further on.—**Clothed in sackcloth.** In these words we have the first of those details of description which may help us in the attempt to identify the witnesses—so far as we attempt this at all. Sackcloth was the dress worn by Elijah, that one of the prophets who, more than any other, was the type of faithful witness for God in a time of general backsliding and apostasy.

4. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth. "Before *the Lord* of the earth," is the more correct reading. We here have another Old Testament allusion. The reference is to Zechariah 4: 2-14, where we read of the golden candlestick and the two olive trees. In our present passage, however, we have *two* candlesticks and two olive trees. The meaning seems to be that alike what was symbolized in the candlestick in Zechariah, and that which was symbolized in the olive trees, is implied again in the two witnesses. Not that the exact meaning in the older and in the later prophecy is the same, but that the resembling symbols in the two have a like *general* significance. In the connection of the passage in Zechariah we read of two official personages, Joshua—the high-priest, representing the spiritual order of the nation, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem, representing the civil order. The candlesticks, "all of gold," seem to symbolize the theocracy, or the economy of the nation in its blended character as alike spiritual and secular; while by the two olive trees are to be understood the two representative persons just named in their official capacity; yet these as being simply the channels through which divine favor should flow to the people; for it is not by might, nor by power, not by outward order or official function, "but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The symbolism, as a whole, then, represents the national system, itself, as a theocracy, a divine institution, made efficient to its end by divine efficiencies imparted to it through instituted agencies. The emphatic feature of the symbolism is not the dual character of the parts seen in it, but the deep, underlying significance of the whole, as representing *a divine institution*, preserved by divine care, and made efficient through divine power. This general symbolism with a like significance is represented in our present passage.

5 And if any man will hurt them, [a] fire proceedeth
out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: [b] and
if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be
killed.
6 These [c] have power to shut heaven, that it rain not
in the days of their prophecy: and [d] have power over
waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth
with all plagues, as often as they will.

5 earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire
proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their
enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them,
6 in this manner must he be killed. These have the
power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during
the days of the prophecy: and they have power over
the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the
earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.

a 2 Kings 1: 10, 12; Jer. 1: 10; 5: 14; Ezek. 43: 3; Hosea 6: 5....b Num. 16: 29....c 1 Kings 17: 1; James 5: 16, 17....d Ex. 7: 19.

5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. The revisers read, as will be noticed, "If any man *desireth* to hurt them. . . . if any man *shall desire* to hurt them," etc. In the second condition the construction of the Greek is peculiar, not classic. We are here reminded of an incident in the life of Elijah (2 Kings 1: 10), when two captains with their "fifties" were destroyed by fire from heaven as they came to take the prophet prisoner, by command of the idolatrous king Ahaziah. In Jer. 5: 14, it is said to the prophet: "Because ye speak this word, behold I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." The Old Testament cast of this allusion in the words now studied is evident. We also remember our Lord's word of promise (Luke 10: 19): "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall in any wise hurt you." God's "witnesses," in whatever age or dispensation, have been under his peculiar care, and the violence and cruelty of their enemies have fallen back upon themselves. The imagery in the Apocalyptic promise to that effect simply presents in a vivid way this truth.

6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. A manifest allusion to the drought and famine, three years in duration, in the time of Elijah.—**And have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.** Such Moses had, as a messenger of God and "witness" to Pharaoh.

The clue to the difficulties of our passage, now, seem to be found in these several allusions. If we couple with them the rule of the ancient economy, that in the mouth of not less than two witnesses everything must be established, and also remember how our Lord, when he sent forth his first witnesses, sent them "two and two," we need not be long seriously at a loss how to understand the "two witnesses" in this chapter. Those who have sought to find an exact representative of the *dualism* here, appear to have overlooked the fact that we are dealing with symbols, not with exact numbers. The "two" witnesses represent the idea of that *adequate* testimony for which God makes provision in giving his truth to mankind. And so, by the "two witnesses" we understand to be meant all true witness for God, especially during a certain express period here held in view, whether this witness be in personal testimony, in public ministry, in ordinances, in institutions, alike of the Christian Church and the Christian State—in all the various forms which he causes testimony in behalf of his own sure word to have. In many of these, indeed, we trace a dualism which need not be passed without notice; such as the two parts of Scripture, Old Testament and New; the two Ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the two permanent offices in the church, the Pastorate and the Diaconate; the two organized forms under which Christianity establishes itself in the world—a true Ecclesiasticism, and a pure Civilization. Personal dualism, too, may be traced: as those witnesses to a pure Christianity in *the West*, whose history we trace in Northern Italy and Southern France, as well as in Britain, during the earlier Christian centuries; and those in *the East*, like the Paulicians. Again, the Waldenses and the Albigenses may be named, the two historical bodies of Dissenters during the middle ages. The Reformation itself went forward under two chief leaders, Luther and Calvin; and wherever prevailing, it has organized itself more or less as recognizing them in this light. These dualisms are no doubt providential, and may, some or all of them, be regarded as more or less implied in what we read, in our passage, of the "two witnesses." Neither group, however, answers

7 And when they [a]shall have finished their testimony, [b]the beast that ascendeth [c]out of the bottomless pit [d]shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of [e]the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, [f]where also our Lord was crucified.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.
8 And their [1]dead bodies *lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt,

[a] Luke 13:32....[b] ch. 13:1, 11; 17:8....[c] ch. 9:2....[d] Dan. 7:21; Zech. 14:2....[e] ch. 14:8; 17:1, 5; 18:10....[f] Heb. 13:12; ch. 18:24.——1 Gr. *carcase.*

the conditions of an adequate exposition of the passage. It is as we group them all, in the idea of a general witness and testimony in behalf of God and a true Christianity, that we seem to be on safe ground.

7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit [the abyss] **shall make war against them.** The word for "beast" (θηρίον), means "wild beast"; a term significant of ferocity and destructiveness. This wild beast is here mentioned in an anticipatory way, it being the same beast, evidently, that is more specifically mentioned in 13:1, in 17:8, and in other places. In ch. 17:8, he is spoken of in the same way as here, as ascending out of the abyss; meaning that same abyss mentioned in chapter nine, out of which the swarming locusts come. In ch. 13:1, however, he is said to ascend "out of the sea." In gaining a true idea of the wild beast, here, we shall need to unite these two representations; in the one of which is implied his Satanic spirit, and in the other his connection with the turbulence and anarchy of the world. It is generally agreed to understand by this formidable appearance the antichristian power, in general, alike as a persecuting Paganism and a persecuting Ecclesiasticism calling itself Christian. In 13:2, it is said that the dragon, or Satan, described in chapter twelve, gave to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." Satan, in fighting the kingdom of God, uses the forces and organisms of this world, whether they take the form of hierarchy, or that of imperialism. This antichristian force, of which we shall have much to say in subsequent expositions, is the wild beast of our present text. By him, war is made against the witnesses, and they are killed. Now, in that connection, what meaning shall we give to the words, "And when they shall have finished their testimony"? If they must be taken absolutely, and so imply a complete and final finishing of the testimony of the witnesses, we seem necessarily taken forward to the end of the Dispensation, since "the witnessing church" will finish its testimony then only. We are not obliged, however, to take the words in this absolute sense. "If," says Carpenter, in Ellicott, "the witnesses are those who have taught the principles of a spiritual and social religion, the death of the witnesses following their overthrow signifies the triumph of opposing principles, the silencing of those who have withstood the growing current of evil." There have been these crises in the history of God's kingdom among men, and notably in Christian history—crises when those who represented this witness for God and his truth have borne their testimony so fully, during a period which would seem to have been especially allotted them, that it may with truth be called "finished." The crisis of this nature, to which we suppose especial reference to be here made, will be noticed further on.—**And shall overcome them, and kill them.** The war of the wild beast upon the witnesses is to be interpreted consistently with the symbolical dress of the whole passage. It is the assault of the antichristian principle, represented by some persecuting power in which it finds embodiment, upon that which is Christian, whether on its part represented in Christian truth, Christian institutions, or Christians themselves. This assault, in the symbolism of the passage, assumes a form which makes it especially deadly, and is so helped by existing conditions, as that it gains a short-lived triumph.

8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt. The word translated "dead bodies" (πτῶμα), is in the singular. Düsterdieck represents this word (πτῶμα, from πίπτω, "*to fall*) by the German word "*gefallene*," something "fallen," or "wrecked." Subsequent allusions, however, require that we shall use the word in its strongest sense. Upon the singular form of

9 [a]And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, [b]and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

9 where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do *men* look upon their [1]dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid

a ch. 17:15....b Ps. 79:2, 3.—1 Gr. *carcase.*

the word the Speaker's Commentary says: "The singular is used collectively"; and Bishop Wordsworth, "they [the witnesses] are *two* and yet *one*." But how shall we understand "the great city"? Various interpretations are given. Stuart, of course, consistently with his general theory, understands by it the city of Jerusalem. Elliott, who adopts throughout a system of historical literalism, thinks Rome is meant. Carpenter, in Ellicott, says: "The city is great, for it is all-important in the eyes of its inhabitants, as public opinion is all-important to the weak and worldly; it is Sodom, for it is the place where, through pleasure and luxuriousness (fullness of bread) the worst forms of immorality take root; it is Egypt, for it is the house of bondage, where the wages of sin become tyrannous; it is Jerusalem, for it is the apostate place where the presence of Christ is hated." We think it possible to preserve, as here, the symbolism of the passage, and still give the interpretation a form more simple and specific. There is an evident connection between the measured temple and "the great city" now mentioned. This is the more evident as we observe the words immediately following.—**Where our** [*their*] **Lord also was crucified.** The reference to Jerusalem is unmistakable. This city, in the symbolism of the chapter, is trodden under foot by the Gentiles, "the nations." In other words, what was once "the holy city" is taken possession of by the godless and the wicked, and becomes, through them, transformed to a "spiritual" Sodom and Egypt; corrupted by sensuality, and turned by persecution into a house of bondage. This imagery is perfectly consistent with that which represents the true church of God, "measured," sacred and safe, by the inner temple of the sanctuary, while the courts without and the city itself are seized and held by the enemy. By the measured temple, therefore, we understand that faithful remnant with whom is the true church; by the courts without, and the city, we understand the antichristian apostasy—Papal Rome. Those who, in one place in the chapter, are represented as the temple, are in other places the witnesses. In the verse now considered, they are seen, after having borne faithful testimony during this allotted period—during the period in which they were to testify, "clothed in sackcloth"; that is to say, in circumstances of continual danger and distress—this being now "finished," they are seen slain by their enemies, while their unburied bodies lie in the streets of the city. The words, "where also our Lord was crucified," are evidently meant to suggest their fellowship with him in suffering, even unto death; a parallelism of which further use is made in subsequent verses.

9. And they of the people and kindreds [*tribes*] **and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half.** This enumeration of people, tribes, tongues, and nations, shows how widespread the operation of the antichristian principle was to be. What we have to say of the interval of three days and a half, here named, we prefer to reserve for the General Comments. Some writers note how nearly identical is this interval of time with that during which our Lord himself lay in his tomb after the crucifixion; an identity which might derive significance from the mention, just made, of the crucifixion itself.—**And shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.** We ought to mention that the verbs in this and the connected verses which have the future tense in the common version, in the best Greek text are in the present. We should read, "*look upon* their dead bodies," "*do not suffer*"; and so the verb supplied in the eighth verse, "Their dead bodies *lie* in the streets of the great city," etc. In like manner the verbs used in ver. 10. What is mentioned in the clause of the ninth verse now under consideration, "suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in the tomb" (*Revised Version*), shows the inveteracy of the hostility. It had not only prompted the murdering of the witnesses, but now prompts to that indignity toward them, as dead, which, according to the ideas of the ancient world, was the last and worst. The

10 [a]And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, [b]and shall send gifts one to another; [c]because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 [d]And after three days and a half [e]the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. [f]And they ascended up to heaven [g]in a cloud; [h]and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour [i]was there a great earthquake, [k]and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain [l]of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, [m]and gave glory to the God of heaven.

10 in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets
11 tormented them that dwell on the earth. And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those who beheld
12 them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies be-
13 held them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake [l]seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

a ch. 12 : 12; 13 : 8....*b* Esther 9 : 19, 22....*c* ch. 16 : 10....*d* ver. 9....*e* Ezek. 37 : 5, 9, 10, 14....*f* Isa. 14 : 13; ch. 12 : 5....*g* Isa : 60; 8; Acts 1 : 9....*h* 2 Kings 2 : 1, 5, 7....*i* ch. 6 : 12....*k* ch. 16, 19....*l* Gr. *names of men*; ch. 3 : 4....*m* Josh. 7 : 19; ch. 14 : 7; 15 : 4.
l Gr. *names of men, seven thousand.*

significance of this will be seen when we come to summarize, in the General Comments, the meaning of all these verses in this connection.

10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another. The verbs, as said above, are in the present, making the language more vivid and graphic. The description, as we shall see, though prophetic in form, has its parallel in history.—**Because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.** They were prophets in the sense of bringing a divine message, spoken by divine command, and under a divine impulse. The "torment" mentioned is that which the wicked and the hostile feel when the word of God deals with them in truth and in faithful severity.

11. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet. In like manner as their Lord had been, they were raised from the dead. The rendering, "*a* spirit of life" is preferred by Lange, Carpenter, the Speaker's Commentary, and others. The revision, as will be seen, makes no change in the article. The Greek phrase (πνεῦμα ζωῆς) may be translated either "breath of life," or, "spirit of life." The latter is implied in the former, especially when we remember that the resurrection here spoken of is properly a communication of spiritual power—a breath of life "from God" to Christian testimony, so that after an interval of enforced silence, it becomes more outspoken and effective than ever. It may be noticed that the tense of the verb here changes again and becomes past, as if the seer were now looking back upon all, and describing it as history.—**And great fear fell upon them which saw them.** Let us mark that the fact stated is the restoration to life of the slain witnesses; the effect is the quick pause so given to the triumphing of their enemies.

12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended to heaven in a [the] **cloud, and their enemies beheld them.** There is evident purpose to indicate in the witnesses, not only a fellowship with their Lord in suffering and death, nor alone in their resurrection to life, but in an ascension to heaven, like his own. The symbolism thus parallels their experience with his. But we must remember that it *is* symbolism; that these "two witnesses" are rather a personification than actual persons; that in them we are to recognize the whole body of Christian witnesses during a long period of persecution for Christ's sake; that under the imagery of their death we are to read the silencing of testimony; under that of the indignity shown to their dead bodies, the scornful malice of the persecutors toward those who preferred death to the denial of their Lord; while in their resurrection we see the restoration of spiritual power, boldness, and effectiveness to the silenced witnesses; and in their ascension to heaven in a cloud, the forth-bursting of the witnessing spirit, such in its extent, the vigor of its inspiration, the intensity of its manifestations, as to astonish all beholders.

13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake. In the Apocalyptic symbolism the earthquake indicates the breaking up of some settled order, by sudden providential visitations. Here it indicates such a visitation, in the shattering of great anti-christian power.—**And the tenth part of the city fell.** The city in whose streets the

bodies of the witnesses had lain unburied. Applying the imagery, we understand by it an effect upon the corrupt system of hierarchical oppression under which the witnesses had suffered, such as may be seen in a city, when some large part of it is laid prostrate by an earthquake. "The tenth part of the godless city," says Lange, "falls in the earthquake. *Ten*, as perfect development, realized freedom, is also perfect will, decided tendency. Thus, with the fall of a tenth part of the antichristian world, the backbone of that world is broken; henceforth it is a confused mass, anxiously expectant of the end." —**And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand.** It seems to us that this simply carries out the imagery. Any attempt to give literal or realistic interpretations to the number, seven thousand, as also the tenth part, necessarily fails.—**And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.** In these words we have indicated the fact that even amongst the enemies of God there may be some capable of learning the lessons of his providence, enforcing his word. When revolution and reformation come, these heed the warning, and "so as by fire" are saved.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We must call attention, once more, to that which was said of the evident intention of what Carpenter, in Ellicott, calls "the interposed visions" of the tenth and eleventh chapters. If we place ourselves in the position of one contemplating the scenes exhibited under the first five trumpets, we may realize how to such a one it might well seem as if every purpose of mercy and good-will toward men in the mind of God was suffering utter defeat; as if alike the truth he had given to the world had been shrouded in final eclipse, and all witness for that truth silenced forever. What has, nevertheless, become of *the truth*, is shown in the tenth chapter; what has become of *the witnesses*, in the eleventh.

From what appears in the former of these chapters it is made evident that no purpose of God, as regards the gospel of man's salvation, fails. He permits to this gospel a fiery ordeal, extending through many centuries. But at the fit time he appears again in its behalf, and through chosen instruments causes it to be once more declared, as here represented in the little book, in primeval simplicity, and in a ministry that bears it "to all the world." By what appears in the eleventh chapter, we are given to understand that while the outer court of the symbolical temple, and the city itself, are trodden under foot by the enemies of God, and truth, and righteousness, the inner sanctuary is kept safe; in other words, there survives, in the very worst of times, a faithful remnant by whom an undesecrated altar is preserved, a true worship offered, and that truth which embodies the substance of ancient types maintained. These are the "witnesses." The voice of a true testimony in God's behalf does not die out of the world, even when persecution rages most hotly; nor is it wholly drowned even when the world's loud tumult is at its worst. These witnesses do, indeed, testify—"prophesy"—"in sackcloth"; the garment of distress and mourning. Such of the Lord's true people as survive in such times are a hunted flock. The truth itself is under reproach, and deriding voices rave against it. The true church and its ordinances are, in the world's esteem, placed in humiliating contrast with the shows and splendors of that apostasy which for the time is supreme, while everything beautiful, and sacred, and beneficent in Christianity is as if clad in the sackcloth of humiliation, and lamenting, in the language of the ancient prophet, that there are none to stand upon the Lord's side. And there comes a time when the triumph of evil seems complete. It is the deeper gloom that precedes the dawn. All the powers of darkness triumph. The murderers of the witnesses "rejoice over them and make merry, and send gifts one to another." But the triumph is brief. Just at this crisis God appears for his truth and his people. The slain witnesses stand upon their feet. They rise in a vigor of life like the glory that shone in the person and face of the risen Lord. Their enemies behold them with consternation, and the triumph which now comes to them in turn is like the Lord's own ascension to heaven in a cloud, receiving all power in heaven and in earth. Effects follow which show how truly divine is that intervention. The hostile power shakes, as when earthquakes rock the globe, while the great and wicked city, in whose streets the slain witnesses have lain, feels the shock.

This is, in general, the picture sketched for us in the striking symbolism of this chapter. If we have read this symbolism aright, there can be, it should seem, only one answer to the question where the historical counterpart shall be sought. There is one point of crisis in modern times which fulfills in a remarkable degree the conditions of an adequate historical parallel to the Apocalyptic picture here sketched. Not as fulfillments of the prophecy in exact detail, but as indicating some general aspects of the period as having this significance, we note the following:

In A. D. 1512–17, a Council was held in Rome, called from the place of its assembly—the Church of St. John Lateran—the Fifth Lateran Council. At the eighth session of this Council, held in December, 1513, a papal bull was issued, in which was a summons to all dissidents from the papal authority to appear before the Council at its next session, in the following May, and to show cause for their continued refusal to acknowledge the pope's supremacy. When the Council came together in that session, May 5, 1514, no answer appeared to this summons. Not that there were no longer those in Christendom who refused allegiance to the usurped authority of Rome, nor because any one could have imagined that opportunity for free protest before the Council would have been allowed; but because, joined with the impossibility of a response under such conditions, it was a fact that, just at that time, there actually was no one ready, like the Wickliffe and the Huss of a former age, or the Luther who was soon to appear, to give a voice to the spirit of revolt against Rome, which, though widely prevalent, was for the most part nursed in secret. "Throughout the length and breadth of Christendom," says Elliott — and his words are true in the sense just explained—"Christ's witnessing servants were silenced: they appeared as dead. The orator of the session ascended the pulpit, and, amidst the applause of the assembled Council, uttered that memorable exclamation of triumph—an exclamation which, notwithstanding the long multiplied anti-heretical decrees of popes and councils, notwithstanding the more multiplied anti-heretical crusades and inquisitorial fires, was never, I believe, pronounced before, and certainly never since—'*Jam nemo reclamat, nullus obsistit!*' 'There is an end of resistance to the papal rule and religion; opposers exist no more!' And again, 'The whole body of Christendom is now seen to be subjected to its Head, that is, to *thee!*'" Three years and a half later, October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his theses to the Wittenberg church-door!

We do not regard this, as Elliott seems to do, as the exact and exhaustive fulfillment of the prediction concerning the death and resurrection of the witnesses. Elliott's critics maintain that the historical interval from May 5, 1514, to October 31, 1517, exceeds the prophetical three days (years) and a half, by eighteen days and one half, according to the Speaker's Commentary, reckoning each year as having 365 days. While in our opinion the objection is without serious weight, since there is no reason to suppose that prophetic intervals of time would be measured with such absolute accuracy as this reasoning implies, we are, upon the other hand, inclined to view the historical incident as illustrative only in a general way of those aspects of the period in question which the prophecy anticipates. It is undoubtedly true that for some time previous to the meeting of this Fifth Lateran Council, as described, the murderers of God's people had been especially active, with results of intimidation and the apparent silencing of dissent and protest highly gratifying to the hierarchy. The crusades against the Albigenses and Waldenses had well-nigh extirpated those troublesome heretics. The measures of the Inquisition in various parts of Europe had succeeded to the utmost wish of those by whom they were carried on. A threatening schism in the papal body itself was healed during the sessions of this Council. So fully, in view of all, did the members of the Council sympathize in the exultant confidence of their orator, that upon the final adjournment they celebrated the triumph which Popery seemed to have achieved in a feast, whose splendor had never in Rome been equaled. It was like the rejoicing, the merry-making, and the sending of gifts of which our prophecy speaks. It is also matter of history that in that same Council there was an emphatic re-affirmation of the long-standing papal law that the bodies of heretics should be denied all rites of Christian burial; so that here, also, we find almost literal fulfillment of the words: "Do not suffer

their bodies to be put in graves." Those conspicuous examples of the application of this law in the exhuming and burning of the bones of Wickliffe, at an earlier date, by command of the Council of Constance, and the direction given by the same Council that the ashes of Huss should be cast into the Lake of Constance, are familiar facts. It may be added, that in like manner the ashes of Savonarola were thrown into the Arno, and that it was common for the papal bulls to ordain that the heretics against whom they were fulminated should not only be put to death, but should be denied Christian burial. These, certainly, are very remarkable correspondences with parts of the prophetic vision now studied. It may not be necessary to press them as exhaustive fulfillments of the prophecy; yet in a general way they are fulfillments, and justify us in fixing upon the period now in question as that to which the eye of the seer, in this part of his vision, was Apocalyptically directed.

It is doubtful if any exposition can be given, not open to serious objection, that will make the numbers in this passage—the forty-two months, the twelve hundred and sixty days, and the three days and a half—indicative of exact and identical periods. The two former are periods during which the witnesses were to prophesy; the last that in which their dead bodies should lie unburied in the streets of the city. It is quite impossible that these should be identical. In the Excursus at the end of the next chapter, we suggest a possible explanation of the forty-two months and the twelve hundred and sixty days, also of the time, times, and a half, during which the mother of the man-child should be "nourished" in the wilderness; these three being, apparently, different expressions for the same period. In like manner, the three days and a half in this present chapter might be accounted for by the historical incidents of which we have just spoken. We confess, however, to a feeling of great hesitation in accepting proposed historical solutions of Apocalyptic numbers; so many such solutions have been confidently proposed, yet in the end have proved delusive. It must be remembered, after all, that these numbers are a part of the symbolism of the book, and it is perhaps better to treat every such solution which may be proposed, however probable it may seem, as at most hypothetical. Reasons might be given for treating them as wholly symbolical, the allusion being to notable incidents in former history; as, for example, in the case now immediately in hand, the three years during which the ministry of Elijah, himself a prophet "clothed in sackcloth," was silenced through the persecutions of Jezebel and the hard-heartedness of the people; or the three days during which our Lord lay in the tomb. We fail, it is true, to find exact correspondences here, yet exactness of that nature may be unnecessary where such symbols are employed.

A question may have been suggested by our exposition of the words: "When they shall have finished their testimony the wild beast shall make war upon them," which ought to be noticed. It might seem, possibly, as if it were *not until* they have finished their testimony that the beast makes war upon the witnesses. And this may be thought to imply that the witnesses find no hindrance or opposition in giving their testimony, until it is finished; as if all goes well with them until then. But the contrary of this is made plainly to appear where it is said that they prophesy "clothed in sackcloth." Indeed, that the witnesses give their testimony in circumstances of trial and danger, is implied all through the passage in which they and their ministry are described. They have enemies, those who desire to "hurt them." They are compelled, in vindication of their mission, like Elijah and like Moses, to invoke the special interposition of divine power—only, in what is said of their shutting heaven, that it rain not, turning the waters into blood, and smiting the earth with every plague, we are to understand that in this language as imagery, founded on the record of God's vindications of his servants in ancient times, is simply presented the truth, that like those witnesses of the Older Dispensation, they have God on their side, who appears for them, vindicates and defends them, in every needful way. But there came a time when the war of the wild beast upon the witnesses assumed a character peculiarly violent and murderous. This was when, in the growth of opposition to the Papacy, the popes were made to see that more violent, and more *concerted* measures must be used. Out of this grew those crusades, in the twelfth and thirteenth cen-

14 [a]The second woe is past; *and,* behold, the third woe cometh quickly.
15 And [b]the seventh angel sounded; [c]and there were great voices in heaven, saying, [d]The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; [e]and he shall reign for ever and ever.

14 The second Woe is past: behold the third Woe cometh quickly.
15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign [1]for ever

[a] ch. 8:13; 9:12; 15:1....[b] ch. 10:7....[c] Isa. 27:13; ch. 16:17; 19:6....[d] ch. 12:10....[e] Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 27.——Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

turies, which were in such a literal sense a 'war," and a most cruel one.

We must not be too realistic in our interpretations of the imagery of a passage like this now studied. The death of the witnesses is represented in the vision as it *seemed* to those who rejoiced over it. Their dead bodies lying in the streets of the city is only a vivid picture of the conviction their enemies had—a mistaken one, as the event proved—that there was now an end to them and to their tormenting testimony. Their resurrection in like manner vividly pictures the *unexpectedness* and *intensity* of that outburst of protest and opposition which occurred, as we know, so soon after it had been supposed, and proclaimed, that opposition and protest had been crushed and silenced. For the witnesses, after all, were not dead, as their enemies imagined. All over Europe, there were those who deeply felt the iniquity of the Papal rule, who abhorred the corruptions of the priesthood, and realized the dishonor so brought upon all true religion. A "new learning" had gained a hold upon the best minds of the age, and out of this came an intellectual stimulus which was sure to sooner or later rise in revolt against the despotism that sought to shackle alike the faith and the thought of mankind. The miracles of history are, after all, processes of cause and effect. Still it is not difficult to realize the shock of surprise to the priesthood when the Reformation burst on Europe. The number of those who came forward in support of the movement; the influential position many of them held; the political and military power soon enlisted in behalf of the Reformers—these developments of formidable opposition burst upon a scene of things where the pope had long seemed absolute master, with startling effect. Apocalyptic imagery shows it to us as a falling of the tenth part of the city, and the slaying of "seven thousand names of men." From the shock of that revelation of its real impotency, even in the moment of its triumph, Rome has never recovered.

14-19. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET SOUNDS.

14. The second woe is past; and behold, the third woe cometh quickly. The word "and" is not in the Greek. The verse is made more graphic by omitting it The phrase, "second woe," does not apply to what we have in the tenth chapter, or to so much of this present one as we have now considered. All this is "interposed" between the sounding of the sixth and the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It applies alone to the vision described immediately in connection with the sounding of the sixth trumpet. In like manner, the "third woe" has respect to what is *implied* in that which follows to the end of our present chapter, rather than to what is expressly said. The picture given us is that of a triumphant epoch in the Redeemer's Kingdom. But this itself implies the overthrow and the passing away of that which opposes, with all which this involves. It is a "woe," involving the defeat and the ultimate overthrow of that which resists the Redeemer's reign, or his kingdom of grace.

15. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying. The revision reads, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven; *and they said.*" The literal rendering would be, "the seventh angel *sounded a trumpet*" (ἐσάλπισε), or "his trumpet." *Whose* voices, is not in any way indicated. It seems to be a climacteric acclaim, in which the heavenly choruses unite, as if to celebrate the advent of some glorious epoch, for which they had been looking and waiting.—**The kingdoms of the world.** We should read, "the *kingdom* of the world," in the singular. This is the true reading of the Greek; and it expresses the idea more exactly. The kingdoms of the world, as political powers, as organized nationalities, viewed as such, are not what the reign of Christ contemplates; but the world itself, as a whole, though including these so far as their direct relations to his own spiritual kingdom are

16 And [a]the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, [b]which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, [c]and hast reigned.
18 [d]And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, [e]and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, [f]small and great; [g]and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

16 and ever. And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces,
17 and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst
18 reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

a ch. 4:4; 5:8; 19:4....*b* ch. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 16:5....*c* ch. 19:6....*d* ver. 2:9....*e* Dan. 7:9, 10; ch. 6:10....*f* ch. 19:6....*g* ch. 13:10; 18:6.

concerned.—**Are become** [*is* become] **the kingdoms** [the kingdom] **of our Lord and of his Christ.** Following the Greek exactly, we should read, "The kingdom of the world is become [omitting 'the kingdom'] of our Lord and of his Christ." More exactly still, according to the Greek, we might read, "The kingdom of the world became [ἐγένετο—denoting an accomplished fact] of our Lord and of his Christ." The meaning is that the kingdom of the world has become our Lord's possession. The expression, "of our Lord," seems to be a mention of the Divine Being in general, as thus supreme; while the additional one, "of his Christ," indicates specifically as the king the Anointed One, the Redeemer, the "Christ." Paraphrastically, we might read, "of our Lord, the Lord God, and of his Anointed One"—anointed, crowned, as at his ascension, that he may be King in Zion.—**And he shall reign forever and ever.** Literally, "*unto the ages of ages*" (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων), the New Testament expression for eternity.

16. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, ["*thrones*"]. We have here another reminder of the fact that John still has before him that wonderful vision of the theophany described in the fourth chapter. In the changes of the Apocalyptic drama, successive scenes have appeared—some of things in heaven, some of things on the earth, some in which heaven and earth alike share. These come and go, while that which the seer first beheld through the opened door of heaven remains as a fixed element in the whole, attention being from time to time centred upon it anew. So it is now. These elders, representatives of the redeemed church, understanding that now the epoch of fulfillment has come for the promises that have comforted and sustained during the long and hot ordeal, welcome its appearing.—**Fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.** They had before been seen in acts of worship, and their voices heard in loud choruses of praise; now they fall upon their faces, showing by this act of deep adoration their sense of the great and wonderful manifestation now made of the goodness, and wisdom, and power of God.

17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. The best Greek text (Westcott and Hort), omits the words here translated, "and art to come." They are supposed to have been inserted by copyists, under the impression that they were necessary to make the passage correspond with ch. 1:4. The words are wanting alike in the Sinaitic and the Alexandrine manuscripts.

18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. Carpenter, in Ellicott, arranges the two verses, in the order of the clauses, as follows:

We thank thee, O Lord,
The God, the Almighty,
He that is, and he that was,
Because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign.
And the nations were angry,
And then came thine anger,
And the season of the dead, to be judged,
And to give their reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints,
And to them that fear thy name, the small and the great,
And to destroy them that destroy the earth.

19 And [c]the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and [b]there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, [c]and great hail.

19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

a ch. 15 : 5, 8....*b* ch. 8 : 5; 16 : 18....*c* ch. 16 : 21.

The best Greek text omits, as we have said, the words, "and art to come." It is a forced exposition, however, to find in this any especial significance. Hengstenberg, for example, takes the absence of this clause—found in other places in similar connections—as an indication that now the final end has come, and that now the church no longer looks forward to the advent which has so long been the object of hope and expectation; in other words, that this chorus of praise carries us beyond the second coming of the Lord, and beyond the millennium, to the final judgment and the end of the world. This, however, assumes that the formula, "which art, and wast, and art to come," as found elsewhere, alludes in the last part of it to the anticipated second coming. We have seen, upon the contrary, that it is but a form of expression for that august name under which of old Jehovah made himself known to Moses and to Israel. It is simply declarative of the eternity of the Divine Being. In this place, the omission of the words, "and art to come," must be regarded as purely incidental; the clause "which art," sufficiently to the purpose in this place, declaring how God exists in an eternal "now." We are to remember, here, what was said to the souls under the altar, that they should "wait yet for a little season" for the vindication that was the burden of their cry, "How long, O Lord"? Also what was said by the "strong angel," standing with his "right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth," and proclaiming that "there shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants, the prophets." The seventh trumpet is now sounded, and that epoch of fulfillment has come. What is implied in this we reserve for the General Comments.

19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [covenant]. The corrected reading is, "And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there was seen the ark of his covenant in his temple." The emphatic thing, here, is that "the ark of his covenant" is disclosed. This, as seen in the ancient temple, was the symbol of divine provision, and promise, and pledge. It was a perpetual memorial of the covenant between God and his people, preserving, at the same time, those things which were such expressive types of the "better things to come." Its disclosure, now, in vision, is the sign that the time for a final, full, complete fulfillment of covenant promise has arrived. Of the good things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the house of Israel, all must come to pass. "The mystery of God" is now to be "finished."—**And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.** It is by this kind of imagery that in various places in this book, as in 8 : 5; 16 : 18, great and startling *revolutions* are described; those epochal dispensations in the divine providence which change the face of the world. What is imported by it in this place, we shall have occasion to notice in what appears below.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

If we have been correct in our expositions of these two chapters, the tenth and eleventh —and we venture to hope that we have not wholly failed to carry with us the convictions of our readers—the conclusion of all will be that the passage just noticed, ver. 14-19, cannot be viewed as fully explained, when taken as a picture of the closing Dispensation and the last days; or, at most, the inauguration of the millennium. That strong expression in the heavenly chorus: "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ," many have seemed to think, could be adequately interpreted only as the final, full, everlasting victory of the kingdom of God over all its enemies. We offer the suggestion: that it is none too strong as representing the change which takes place when this kingdom, having passed *the period*

of ordeal, enters that of final *progress and achievement*. In the General Comments at the end of the tenth chapter, we have noted the significance of that epochal point of change, at which the Church of Jesus Christ, resuming its function as the messenger of a pure and true gospel, and as announcing to the world the finishing of "the mystery of God," became, as never before, an element of powerful and effective transformation. Surely, the church, and Christianity as embodied in the church, have been since that time a "kingdom," in a marked and pre-eminent sense. There has been in them an element of spiritual power not equaled even in those days of primitive vigor, when the religion of Christ seemed carrying all before it. For in these later centuries, Christianity has been able, not only to overcome the opposition without; but to reform the evil within. The progress has been steady, of the growing supremacy of Christian principle in all spheres and relations of human life, the effectiveness of Christian teaching as an element of intellectual and moral revolution, and the whole work of social and political transformation after Christian ideals. If one should judge of this progress by what appears at any one moment, or in any one generation of the post-reformation period, he might see much to make him doubtful as to which force is really prevailing in the struggle—the Christian or the Antichristian. Looking at the period as a whole, the change is so wonderful, especially as we compare the period with former ones, that the thoughtful and candid observer must surely see the only explanation in the fact that "the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." There are those who are fond of attributing all to the growth of intelligence; but what is this "intelligence," in its really good and great sense, save a reflection of the heavenly radiance itself? to the power of modern ideas—but where did these ideas have their source? to intellectual freedom and resultant cultures and developments—but to what is the modern world above all indebted for its intellectual freedom? If we think of the world as "the field" for gospel sowing, how widely has the sower gone abroad, and what wonderful harvests have followed the sowing! If we think of it as the territory over which Christ is to reign in millennial glory, to what a wonderful degree is his reign already established, and how almost literally true are those words *now*, which the inspired apostle, by anticipation, addressed to the church in the beginning of its history—"*all things are yours!*" If we apply in this way the words under consideration, ver. 14-19, we must, without doubt, understand them as embracing the whole of this period to which our own age belongs—that which is still future as well as that which is already past.

With the closing words of this chapter one grand section of the Apocalyptic scheme is complete—that, namely, which, viewing the Church of Jesus Christ as the true Israel of God, exhibits its earthly career under imagery based upon the history of ancient Israel in its relations with the heathen world in each age. The next chapter, as we shall see, takes us back again to "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," and the same great history is prophetically foreshadowed in a new system of symbols, and at new points of view. In that second section, beginning with chapter twelve and closing with chapter nineteen, the fortunes of the church are traced more in detail, and events at "the time of the end" are dwelt upon in a way not attempted here. The closing passage in this present section comprises, within the compass of a few verses, centuries of human life; and in the two final verses seems to sum up all those tremendous events which are to make memorable to all eternity the last ages of time. The "angry nations" are Gog and Magog gathering again their hosts for a war upon the city and camp of the saints, as described in chapter twenty, below; the wrath that comes is the fire from heaven which devours them; "the time of the dead that they shall be judged" is the assembling of all "the dead, both great and small," before "the great white throne"; the reward of the faithful is the glory and blessedness of the final redemption; and the destruction of "them which destroy the earth" is the consignment of dragon and beast and false prophet to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, forever and ever. As the temple door, seen in Apocalyptic vision, opens, and the ark of the covenant is disclosed, it is a sign that the covenant promises have all come to their fulfillment; while the lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and

CHAPTER XII.

AND there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

1 AND a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,

earthquake, and down-rushing tempest of hail, symbolize the tumult of a world's final catastrophe, and that passing away of the old which ushers in the "new."

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

1-6. THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.

1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven. The primary meaning of the word here translated "wonder" (*σημεῖον*), is "sign." The latter word is also the preferable rendering in this place, inasmuch as what is described, like all other appearances in these successive visions, is presented to view, not simply as something wonderful, but as having Apocalyptic meaning and significance. It is to some extent equivalent to the word "symbol," as used in the exposition. We may very properly connect it, in its form and significance, with the Greek word in ch. 1: 1. We there read: "And he sent and signified (*ἐσήμανεν*) it by his angel unto his servant John." "Signified it" by "signs" (*σημεῖα*), such as the "great" one—great in its purpose and import—here described. A like usage of the same Greek word is found, Matt. 24: 30: "Then shall appear the *sign* of the Son of man in heaven." What these opening words of the chapter say is, then, that now a new, and a "great" representative and symbolical figure appears on the scene. The word "heaven" must not be taken as indicating, strictly, the abode of the blessed—that is to say, it must not be too *literally*, or exclusively, taken in that sense. In this place, as in 4: 1, where mention is made of the door "opened in heaven," the word indicates, in general, the Apocalyptic scene—the great theatre upon which John sees all these amazing visions come and go. We cannot conceive of the "dragon" as in heaven, in the strict meaning of the word, nor of the "wilderness" as there; nor, even, the "woman" herself, with her "man-child." Neither, under any such strict construction can we readily connect with these features of the vision those subsequent ones, of the war between Michael and the dragon, the wild beast rising out of the sea, with other like figures and changes in the drama as it proceeds. If, however, we conceive of the scene of the vision as being *itself* a vision, with what is most prominent and most fixed in it belonging to the spiritual sphere, yet so broad and general in range as to take in the earth with earthly objects and incidents, the firmament, also, with its stars, we shall better apprehend the true character of the description as it stands. Upon this Apocalyptic scene, then, thus broad and varied, this "great sign" appears.—**A woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.** The passage in Canticles (6: 10) is sometimes quoted in this connection, as suggestive in its parallelism: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Beginning with the earliest of the commentators on this book, Victorinus, whose works have been preserved, expositors, so far as we can find—with the exception of those Romanists who, consistently with the fundamental error in their general teaching, understand by the woman the virgin mother of the Lord—agree that by this "sign," this new figure in the Apocalyptic drama, we must understand the Church. It is the Church, taken in a very large sense, as the spiritual kingdom of God—"*antiqua Ecclesia*," says Victorinus, "*patrum et prophetarum, et sanctorum apostolorum*"—"the ancient church of the fathers, the prophets, and the holy apostles." It is this church, however, in the strictly *spiritual* sense. The importance of this distinction will appear when we come to study the fortunes of the church as in the wilderness—God's faithful spiritual remnant. As "clothed with the sun," the church here appears in her true character as "the light of the world." It is, says Carpenter, in Ellicott, "the radiance of her Lord, whose countenance was as the sun" (ch. 1: 16), and caught from him, as reflected divine glory shone in the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. The moon under her feet may indicate how all subordinate lights are subject to her; or it may indicate the *inferiority* of that which shines

2 And she being with child cried, [e] travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
3 And there appeared another [b] wonder in heaven; and behold [c] a great red dragon, [d] having seven heads and ten horns, [e] and seven crowns upon his heads.

2 and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child: and she crieth out, travailing in
3 birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and

a Isa. 66: 7; Gal. 4: 19....b Or, *sign*....c ch. 17: 3....d ch. 17: 9, 10....e ch. 13: 1.

by mere *reflection*. The light in which the church is clothed, and in which she becomes the light of the world, is an original radiance —the light of the sun. The moon, again, is a symbol of *change;* the sun of *fixedness* and steadfastness. Human teaching is full of change and fluctuation; the divine teaching shines steadily on, from age to age, whether the heaven itself be cloudy or clear. The crown of twelve stars seems to be an allusion, once more, to the twelve tribes of ancient Israel, and the twelve Christian apostles. The "crown" is the garland (στέφανος) given as a reward to victors not the royal crown (διάδημα) worn by kings. This crown, therefore, is not a symbol of sovereignty; nor is the church sovereign, in any sense of the word. It is the symbol of her overcoming. The stars are representative of that ministry by which her function as the light of the world is discharged. "Twelve" is the number of spiritual completeness. The representative allusion is to the twelve tribes of Israel, and again and chiefly to the twelve apostles.

2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. The revision says: "And she was with child, and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered." We are here, again, at the beginning of the Christian Dispensation. The same periods in Christian history which have already been exhibited, under the symbolism of former visions, are now again coming in view, and the kingdom of God in its world-history once more appears on the scene, in the successive vicissitudes of its great ordeal. But the vision now becomes far more specific. This same point of beginning was indicated, at the opening of the first seal (6: 1, 2), by the appearance of the rider on the white horse, going forth as a conqueror. Under that symbolism, as we saw in our exposition of the passage, was exhibited in a general way simply that era of triumph in which the Gospel Dispensation opened. We are now, again, at the same point of beginning in Christian history; but we see how, in the Apocalyptic order, the visions become more distinct and definite. Consistently with this, the present one opens with the Incarnation—the birth of the man-child. In his human nature, Christ was of that people in whom was embodied, under earthly forms and types, the kingdom of God—in that sense, the Church. This kingdom of God did not pass away, nor even in its essential nature undergo any change, when the old Judaic order gave place to the new and Christian one. Taken in this large sense, the church is one, and is here represented, as we have seen, under the symbol of the Woman, clothed with the sun. She comes on the scene at the moment when that great wonder of the Incarnation is about to transpire.

3. And there appeared another wonder ["*sign*"] **in heaven.** It is not, we must again observe, in heaven as the especial abode of God and all holy beings, that even the Woman is seen—for the church, though heavenly in origin, has its history on earth: neither is it, as some have held (Bede, Bengel, *et al.*), in heaven, in the sense of the Christian Church, that the Woman appears—for the Woman is herself the church. Neither, therefore, is it in heaven as taken in either of these two senses, that this other "sign" appears, but in the Apocalyptic "heaven," as already explained.—**And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.** The word translated "crowns," here, is not the same as in ver. 1. It means "diadems," and is so translated in the revision. It denotes sovereignty. This inauspicious "sign," or its equivalent, has once before been introduced, in ch. 9: 11, where the same being is seen as the "king" over that thronging multitude of evil spirits represented in the imagery of the locusts out of the pit. He is here, as there, the Abaddon, the Apollyon—both "Destruction," and "Destroyer." Only now his symbol is still more significant of his true nature. He is the Dragon, uniting to the serpent form which he chose in the first temptation (he is ex-

4 And [a]his tail drew the third part [b]of the stars of heaven, [c]and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood [d]before the woman which was ready to be delivered, [e]for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, [f]who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne.

4 upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman who is about to be delivered, that when
5 she is delivered, he may devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child

a ch. 9 : 10, 19....*b* ch. 17 : 18....*c* Dan. 8 : 10....*d* ver. 2....*e* Ex. 1 : 16....*f* Ps. 2 : 9; ch. 2 : 27; 19 : 15.

pressly called in ver. 9 of this chapter "that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan"), that most hideous one of all which earthly creatures present—that of scaly monsters, dreadful to the sight and fearful in the encounter. His color is a fiery-red, denoting the rage in which he burns against all that is good, and the insatiable spirit of destruction that animates him. The seven heads indicate that he comprehends and sums up in himself all that is infernal in spirit and in form, while the ten horns symbolize, as Lange says, "the complete world-power." Upon his seven heads, seven crowns are seen, denoting the absoluteness of his infernal sovereignty. In this terrific figure, then, we have presented to view the consummation of wickedness, of deadly hate, of that which, Satanic or worldly, arms itself most obdurately against God and his church.

4. And his tail drew ["*draweth*," present tense] **the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.** The mention, here, in such a way, of the dragon's tail is consistent with the fact that such creatures as the crocodile, whose form and nature are in part seen in this figure of the dragon, have so much of their power in the tail, and so often use it to sweep their prey within reach. "*Three*," says Lange, "is the number of spirit. A *third* is a fraction—in reference to spiritual things." The frequent recurrence of this fraction in ch. 8, will be readily recalled: "the third part of trees," ver 7, "the third part of the sea," "the third part of the creatures which were in the sea," "the third part of the ships," ver. 8, 9; "the third part of the sun," "the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars," ver. 12, etc. In all this imagery physical things are employed to set forth that which is spiritual; and it has already been explained as denoting disastrous revolutions in the sphere of spiritual things. In our present passage, as in the former one, by the falling to earth of these stars is meant, in the words of Lange, "an apostasy of the third part of the spiritual church—heaven. These stars are, by the lashings of the Satanic tail, by the magic of an apparently prodigious vital power, cast from heaven to earth; *i. e.*, from being stars of the invisible church, they become demonic organs of the external church, and of Christian political order." Thus is indicated that apostasy in which the Christian ministry became an antichristian hierarchy. The description seems to be in some degree anticipatory, looking forward so as to foreshadow that career of mischief which subsequent chapters note in detail. The fractional "third" is not, of course, to be literally pressed.—**And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.** We may translate: "And the dragon stood [Anglo-American revision, "standeth"] before the woman who is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child." The words have an underlying historical sense, and as based on this a more extended figurative one. At the very moment of his birth the child Jesus encountered the hostility of Herod, thoroughly Satanic in its malice and violence. At a later time Satan himself was met in personal conflict, alike in the temptations of the wilderness, and in those repeated instances of demoniacal possession which seem to have had a like meaning. But these were representative of a wider fact—the fell spirit of hate and hostility toward the Redeemer personally and his whole work of redemption, shown by him through whose malice sin itself came into the world, "and death by sin," and by whom, also, all the hosts of opposition, age by age, are marshaled and led on. The dragon standing before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as born, is a wonderfully vivid representation, under physical imagery, of a momentous and far-reaching spiritual fact.

5. And she brought forth a man-child,

6 And [a]the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there [b]a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.

6 was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

a ver 4....b ch. 11:3.

who was [*is*] **to rule all nations with a rod of iron.** More exactly, she brought forth "*a son*, a man-child." The manhood of the child is thus emphasized. He was to possess pre-eminent manhood. In the words that follow it is shown how he is "born a conqueror," as Lange expresses it; in harmony with what the first seal disclosed of him who went forth "conquering and to conquer." Here we read, he shall "rule all nations with a rod of iron." Conquer and rule them, however, in a way all his own. The word for "rule" (ποιμαίνειν) is here, as in ch. 2:27, to *govern*, or *rule, as a shepherd.* It is the same word as in the Septuagint of Ps. 2:9: "Thou shalt break [*rule*, ποιμανεῖ] them with a rod of iron." This man-child is to fulfill that Messianic prophecy. The nature of the "rule," the "shepherding," is to be especially marked. It is not a rule of mere force, not a mere exertion of arbitrary power. It is such rule as the shepherd has over his flock. The staff, however, the "rod," which he bears as the symbol of this rule, is "of iron." The sovereignty exercised is gentle, yet constraining; it is the rule of love; but of power no less. He who exercises it "shall not strive nor cry," yet he shall "bring forth judgment unto truth." This rule, too, was to extend to "all nations." Not at once, at least as an accomplished fact; but ultimately, as a supremacy anticipated, announced, even at the beginning, virtual, even during the centuries when it should seem to be successfully resisted, and in the end complete and unquestioned. These words: "who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron," cover in their significance long ages of human history. They reveal the thread of divine purpose, running through all the confusions, anarchies, and revolutions of this world's affairs, down to the very time of the end, and which will at last be seen to have been amidst all a principle of order, making the end certain even from the beginning.—**And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.** "After a conflict," says Alford, "with the prince of this world, who came and tried him, but found nothing in him, the son of the woman was taken up to heaven and sat on the right hand of God. Words can hardly be plainer than these." He rejects wholly, and with reason, Elliott's strange notion, into which he seems forced by the necessities of his peculiar theory of interpretation, that by the man-child in this place is meant the Emperor Constantine, born in his conversion, a son of the church, and "caught up unto God and to his throne" by being made sovereign of the Roman Empire, united with the solemn public profession of the divinity of the Son of man. It is by such violent wresting of the plain meaning of the text, we must again say, in earnest protest, that the book we are studying has so often been made to seem hopeless of satisfactory interpretation. The final effort of the dragon to "devour" the child was in instigating the Jews to crucify him at the last. But that crowning incident, which seemed, indeed, like a victory for the dragon, was the triumph of the Redeemer. From that valley of humiliation and death, he was "caught up unto God and to his throne." "For him hath God exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins." This is the history underlying the wider spiritual significance of the words. "Caught up unto God and to his throne," means, in this broader view, the victorious reign of Christ among the nations from age to age.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God. The flight of the woman into the wilderness is more fully described in ver. 14. We reserve for the comment in that place our exposition of this significant but difficult statement. Here we may simply notice that this flight into the wilderness was wholly in accordance with divine purpose and plan.—**Where she hath a place prepared of God,** and it was provided **that they should feed** [Rev. Ver., "*may nourish*"] **her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.** Of the meaning of

this, and the connection of the number given with similar ones before noticed, it will be better to speak further on.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

It is important to remark that the repetition of the same general subject, in vision and prophecy, is no unusual thing in the Scriptures. Examples are readily found in the Old Testament. Thus Joseph's two dreams, as related to his brethren (Gen. 37: 5-11), had the same significance, though differing in form. Of Pharaoh's two dreams (Gen. 41: 1-24), Joseph, in expounding them, said: "The dream of Pharaoh is *one*." The prophecy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2: 29-45), of the image of gold, silver, brass, and iron, was interpreted by Daniel with a meaning identical, at least in the main particulars, with his own vision described in ch. 8: 1–12. The Messianic prophecies appear under many forms, some more and others less explicit. Joseph explains to the Egyptian king the meaning of this feature in the prophetical procedure: "For that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." We may thus trace in it a double intention: (1) that the one vision or prediction may *confirm* the other; (2) that in studying them together they may mutually *explain* each other. Necessarily, prophecy is obscure. Couched in vision and symbol, in order that it may the better serve the end of prophecy—which is to foreshadow, not to relate, as in history—it is to be comprehended even "in part" only as a result of much study. Such study is facilitated by reproducing the general theme under various forms of representation, as an artist might use the same general subject in successive pictures. Such is the method followed in this book. The same periods of Christian history are repeatedly brought under view, under differing aspects, yet so in relation to each other as that they become mutually explanatory. This we have seen, already, in the case of the seals and the trumpets. It is once more before us in the relation of this present division of the book (ch. 12; 19), to that which we have just been studying (ch. 5: 11).

It would seem that Alford's view of the account given, here, of the birth of the manchild is too strictly literal, and Carpenter's too little so. The former says: "On the nature of this vision, as introductory to the whole imagery of the latter part of the Apocalypse . . . it is only needful to add that the principal details . . . are rather descriptive than strictly prophetical; relating, just as in the prophets the descriptions of Israel and Judah, to things passed and passing, and serving for the purpose of full identification and of giving completeness to the whole vision." This seems to imply that the account must be taken as simply historical; and in the details of his subsequent exposition he evidently proceeds upon this theory. Upon the other hand, Carpenter, in Ellicott, says: "This, then, is the picture of the Church fulfilling her destiny in pain. Her work was to bring forth Christ to men, and never to be satisfied till Christ was formed in them; *i. e.*, till the spirit of Christ, and the example of Christ, and the teaching of Christ were received, loved, and obeyed, and men transformed to the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Even if this remoter meaning be found in the passage, we can see no good reason for rejecting, or passing by, that which is nearer at hand, and so much more obvious. May not that story of the Lord's human birth with which the Gospels begin, be used, here, in the prophecy as a prophetical point of view, from which the seer looks forward to ages of the future, anticipating that spiritual outcome which lay, as a germ, in the historical fact? This appears to be Lange's view, where he says: "The *unity* of the Old and the New Testament Church of God lay, doubtless, much nearer to the contemplation of John, than to that of an exegesis whose view is, in many respects, too exclusively fixed upon externalities. Though it is impossible that John could have apprehended the woman as *Mary* herself, yet the fact was most closely present to his consciousness that this Mary, whose bodily offspring Christ was, was the final concentration of the Old Testament Theocracy—the Theocracy which, in its inner essence, spiritually gave birth to the Messiah, and which, in respect of this inner essence again, continued, as the Kingdom of God, in a new and New Testament shape." A less labored exegesis, yet one which for that very reason may be more satisfactory to plain readers, is that of Durham: "This description of the Church's

7 And there was war in heaven: [a]Michael and his angels fought [b]against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels *going forth* to war with the dragon; and the

a Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1....b ver. 3; ch. 20: 2.

infancy," he says, "is set down with special allusion to the manner of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming into the world: (1) as he was a child, born of a woman, in many outward wants, so are his people brought forth in many straits; (2) as Herod watched to destroy him, as soon as he was born, so doth the devil by other persecuting instruments watch the Church to crush her seed, immediately after their birth, as it were, and in their very infancy, even as Pharaoh sought to destroy the Jew's male-children; (3) As Christ was born, and preserved till he had finished the work committed to him, notwithstanding all of the enemy's malice and craft, so shall it be with the Church's seed; (4) as he, immediately after his birth was pursued, made to flee, and carried to Egypt, so shall it be with the gospel-church, who should be made to flee immediately after the first delivery." Whether, or not, we carry the parallelism into this measure of detail, the general thought, here, seems to be a just one, save that Dunham appears to confuse, in some measure, the Church and the Child. The Church is not the Child, but the Mother of the Child.

With the appearance of the dragon that representation begins of the forces in opposition to the kingdom of God in its progress among men, which characterizes the division of the book now to be studied. Its Old Testament analogies are found in the Book of Daniel. The symbolism employed is that of monstrous bestial forms. Chief amongst them is this of the dragon, identified as "that Old Serpent, the Devil, and Satan." That he appears first on the scene is consistent with the fact that all opposition to God's spiritual kingdom, and all persecution of his people, is of Satanic instigation. We shall find in due time how the dragon (ch. 13: 2) gives to another of these monstrous forms "his power, and his throne, and great authority" (Revision), the formidable power there represented being so recognized as simply the instrument of Satan. The second beast, which comes up out of the earth (13: 11), in his turn "exerciseth all the power of the first beast" which came up out of the sea, and which received *his* authority and power and throne from the dragon. Back of all these monstrous and terrible forms of deadly hostility to God and his truth, and to his people, we find the dragon, whose instrument they are, and who invests them with such attributes of terror. This Satanic element in the whole representation, is the key to all right exposition of the visions as they come, one after another, on the scene.

7-12. MICHAEL AND THE DRAGON.

7. And there was war in heaven. "And there *became* (ἐγένετο) war in heaven." "A war *broke out* in heaven," we might, perhaps, paraphrase it. Some expositions of the passage now to be studied, appear to set aside its symbolism, almost entirely. Thus Alford says: "We now enter upon a mysterious series of events in the world of spirits, with regard to which merely fragmentary hints are given us in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament we find the adversary, Satan, in heaven. In Job 1: 6, he appears before God as the Tempter of his saints; in Zechariah 3, we have him accusing the High-priest in God's presence [how singular that these should be taken as literal and actual occurrences!]. Again our Lord, in Luke 10: 18, exclaims, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' So that this casting down of Satan from the office of accuser in heaven, was evidently connected with the great justifying work of redemption." Is it possible that this writer would teach us that Satan was ever allowed to be *actually* and *personally* in heaven, as an accuser of God's children? Is there any place in Scripture where the language used is more evidently pictorial and figurative, than in these above quoted? Carrying out his theory of interpretation here, Alford must hold, if consistent, that this "war in heaven" was an actual occurrence; that in the very presence of God in heaven, such a conflict took place; as if the poetical inventions of Milton, in his own picture of such a conflict, were veritable history! We once again place over against Alford's literalness, the contrasted view of Carpenter, in Ellicott. The note upon this

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

8 dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in

passage describing the war in heaven is: "We shall fail to catch the spirit of its meaning if we insist upon detaching the passage from its context; and the more so that the structure of the chapter seems to give an express warning against doing so. The narrative of the woman's flight into the wilderness is suspended that this passage may be inserted. Could we have a clearer indication of the anxiety of the sacred writer to connect this war in heaven with the birth of the man-child? The man-child is born; born a conqueror. The dragon is his foe, and the powers of the foe are not confined to the material and historical world; he is a power in the world spiritual; but the man-child is to be entirely a conqueror. His rapture into heaven is the announcement that there, in the very highest, he is acknowledged victor, and his victory is won over the power of the old serpent, whose head is now bruised. 'The prince of this world cometh,' said Jesus Christ, 'and hath nothing in me. Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' Do we need more?" Perhaps not, if sufficient scope be allowed to the words quoted. If, however, they are understood as limited to the work of redemption, victoriously achieved by our Lord, we *do* "need more." For in the visions of this book redemption is only one element among many. The "war" which comes before us in such variety of phases, covers a very wide field of conflict, and involves many issues. It is a war of hostile forces opposed to each other upon the world-theatre, and whose vicissitudes are recorded in the world's written history, as well as a war between the Redeemer and the Destroyer in the interest of man's redemption. The symbolism of our present passage—and we must remember that it is with symbolism that we are dealing—brings it before us in that wide meaning and scope which takes in the whole conflict of Christ with Satan, the kingdom of God with the kingdom of the Evil One. The scene of it, as it appears in the vision, is the Apocalyptic "heaven."—**Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.** When we come to consider ver. 11, below, we shall find help in the more full interpretation of these words. Those who are there represented as *overcoming* seem clearly to be they who are here seen to be *contending*—the "angels" of Michael. The weapons they use, likewise (ver. 11)—"the blood of the Lamb" and "the word of their testimony"—suggest the nature of the conflict. Of this we shall have more to say directly. For the present we must observe how evident it is that the word "angels" is not to be understood as meaning angels in the literal sense. It is not through "the blood of the Lamb" that angels overcome, neither are they angels who have committed to them the word of "testimony." Alike the conflict, the issue, and the parties contending are such as we find again mentioned in ch. 17: 14, where of those to whom the dragon gives his power, and whom he uses as his instruments, it is said: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful," or, as the new version gives it, "and they *also shall overcome* that are with them, called, and chosen, and faithful," the words in *italics* being supplied. The passages are so evidently parallel in their general sense, that we must view them as introducing the same characters. "Michael and his angels" are the Lamb and they "that are with him." The "Michael" of our present passage is a representative figure, in the same sense that "the Lamb" is so. Only the former one brings before us the Divine Person so represented, in his character and office as a divine leader and prince, as the latter presents him more in his office as the suffering Saviour. He is spoken of in Dan. 10: 21, as "Michael your prince." By the dragon "and his angels," we understand Satan, and all Satanic agents and instruments.

8. And prevailed not. The evil power, though with all its hosts marshaled and led on, suffers defeat.—**Neither was their place found any more in heaven.** As seen in the vision, they not only suffer defeat, but are driven off the scene of conflict, leaving for Michael and his angels a perfect victory.

9 And [a]the great dragon was cast out, [b]that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, [c]which deceiveth the whole world: [d]he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, [e]Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, [f]which accused them before our God day and night.

9 heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole [1]world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with
10 him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, [2]Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night.

a Luke 10:18; John 12:31....*b* Gen. 3:1, 4; ch. 20:2....*c* ch. 20:3....*d* ch. 9:1....*e* ch. 11:15; 19:1....*f* Job 1:9; 2:5; Zech. 3:1.—1 Gr. *inhabited earth*....2 Or, *Now is the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom, become our God's, and the authority* is become *his Christ's.*

Those who view the passage as describing an actual conflict in the actual heaven, of course understand by the words just given, the casting out of the rebel angels. There is no good reason for supposing any reference, here, at all, to that event of which we find in the Scriptures only intimations so very obscure—the revolt and defeat and fall of the rebel angels. Such an event has no proper connection with the subject of these visions, and can be brought into the interpretation only by giving a violent wrench to the words as they stand. This will be confirmed, we trust, by what appears below.

9. And the great dragon was cast out [*cast down*]**, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.** The author of evil is here indicated, by his attributes and his deeds.—**He was cast out** [*cast down*] **into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.** We have, here, another reason why what is described cannot be the fall of those "angels which kept not their first estate," since not "the earth," but hell—the "outer darkness"—was "the place prepared for the devil and his angels." Lange's view that what occurs is the casting of the dragon and his angels "out of the inner spiritual church upon the external church and the ecclesiastico-political institution," assumes that at first the dragon and his angels were *in* the "inner spiritual church"—a very violent assumption, surely. Besides, as we shall see presently, the scope of the passage is not to be limited thus absolutely to a particular period or event in Christian history. The victory described, let be observed again, is not annihilation, neither is it *final* victory, as what appears in ver. 12 plainly shows. The dragon and his angels are driven from the field of view comprehended in this present vision—the vision of "the war,"—but they have not abandoned any of their fell purposes, and will soon reappear in other measures of attack upon the kingdom of God. They are cast out "into the earth"; by which we simply understand their failure in one form of assault, and their forced withdrawal to another and for them a more hopeful scene of operations—"the earth"; understanding by this, not merely the world of human abodes, but that world as seen from its most "earthly" side; that which, in itself, "earthly and sensual," easily becomes "devilish."

10–12. THE VICTORY CELEBRATED.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven. Or, "And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying." **Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.** In the Greek the article occurs, and should be translated, in connection with each of the words, "salvation," "strength" ("power," δύναμις), and "kingdom." In the Greek, besides, the word translated "is come" (ἐγένετο) in the common version, should be rendered "became," or "is [has] become." The new revision translates, "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority (ἐξουσία) of his Christ." In the margin, however, it has, "Now is the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom become our God's, and the authority *is become* his Christ's"; the second "is become" being supplied. The general sense, in either case, is the same, possibly made a little more clear in the second form of the translation. This burst of heavenly praise, as in 11: 16–18, and in other places, seems to be simply the adoring recognition by heavenly beings of the new manifestation seen of divine power and grace, achieving victories over the enemies of God and the destroyers of the world. We trust it will not be amiss if we compare these interposed acclamations of thanksgiving and praise to the choruses of the Greek drama. The four-and-twenty elders, repre-

11 And [a]they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; [b]and they loved not their lives unto the death.

11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony;

a Rom. 8: 33, 34, 37; 16: 20....b Luke 14: 26.

sentatives of the redeemed church, the four living creatures, representing the sentient creation, the angels encircling all with their countless hovering hosts, are spectators, along with John, of the successive scenes in this far grander and more momentous drama; and as the chorus of the Greek tragedy, from time to time, gives utterance to the passion of the scene, so in this case the beholding myriads of heaven, as new and startling exhibitions of divine power appear, or fulfillments of divine purpose, burst out anew in triumphant songs and hallelujahs. It is like the "joy in heaven" of which our Lord was wont to speak. We are not to understand, therefore, that "the salvation, the power, and the kingdom" have now first in the history of the universe *become* of God and Christ; for these from eternity and to eternity are theirs; but new *demonstrations* of the divine reign, in power and grace, are seen and acknowledged.—**For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night.** The Hebrew *Satan*, means an adversary who, as Gesenius says, "seduces men to evil, and accuses and calumniates them before God." It corresponds to the Greek word (κατήγωρ), here used, and translated "*accuser*." As intimated above, it is altogether a mistaken literalism to understand by this an actual, personal accusation of men in the presence of God. It is rather a representation, under the figure of such personal accusation, of that Satanic agency by which men are seduced to sin, and through their sins are brought into condemnation. The imagery recognizes, in a graphic and striking way, the part which the author of evil has, alike in the sin and in the dreadful consequences which follow. [It is scarcely safe to disregard entirely the literal sense of the designation, *accuser*, or *accuser of our brethren*. For the arch-enemy, ever ready to fan the spirit of persecution to a flame, in State or Church, has always an excuse for what he is doing. The early Christians were accused of Thyestian feasts, of licentious orgies, of dishonoring the gods and the emperors, or of refusing to serve the state in this or that office. At a later period, the humblest and purest Christians were persecuted by the Papal Church, but always under pretence of zeal for truth. "Perverters of truth," "despisers of the sacraments," "heretics of every name," were assailed with accusations of evil before they were brought to the court of the Inquisition or sent to the stake. The Destroyer is also the Accuser. And these accusations have often been very sanctimonious, made as it were before God, and under the plea of honoring his holiness.—A. H.] This ceaseless activity of temptation and Satanic instigation reaches *all* men, Christians as well as others—a fact strikingly recognized in those places in his Epistles where Paul sets forth so graphically the perpetual warfare of the Christian soldier. The machinations of Satan are especially busy with such—"night and day"—seeking to disturb their peace with God, and to bring between them and him the cloud of his just displeasure. It is of such that the heavenly chorus speaks—"our brethren."

11. And they overcame him. The adversary always suffers final defeat, because "greater is he that is for us than they that be against us."—**By the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.** Many expositors seem to think that the allusion is alone to the personal triumph of the redeemed soul in the final salvation. Thus Alford: "Without that," the shedding of the blood of the Lamb, "the adversary's charges against them would have been unanswerable . . . It is *because* they have given a faithful testimony, even unto death, that they are victorious." Bengel's paraphrase of the previous verse better indicates the scope of the passage: "The salvation, by which the saints are delivered, the power by which the enemy was overthrown, the kingdom which displays God's majesty." The overcoming has reference to all this. Upon the verse (ver. 11) now immediately in view, Bengel's comment is: "Because of the blood of the Lamb—this blood purified the brethren from all sin, and so the accuser could bring nothing against

12 Therefore [a]rejoice, *ye* heavens, and ye that dwell in them. [b]Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, [c]because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

12 and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that [1]dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

a Ps. 96: 11; Isa. 49: 13; ch. 18: 20....*b* ch. 8: 13; 11: 10....*c* ch. 10: 6.——1 Gr. *tabernacle.*

them. And because of the word of their testimony—the word which they believed, and because they believed, they spoke and gave testimony to it, and suffered all for it. . . . Where there is such power in the heart, there also will the name of Christ, and the righteousness, which is in that name, be confessed without fear." It is not, then, simply the *personal* overcoming of the faithful believer; it is his overcoming, not only as contending *in* Christ, but *for* him; Christ's redeemed one and true soldier, loving not his life unto the death. We, therefore, think it limiting the words quite too much to make them mean only what directly concerns the believer's own salvation. It is his whole battle as one of the "called, and chosen, and faithful"; standing with Michael against the dragon "and his angels." Particular attention should be given to the force of the Greek preposition (διά) with the accusative (διὰ τὸ αἷμα—διὰ τὸν λόγον). It means "*on account of*," "*because of* [not 'by,' as in the common version], the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony."

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. This summons to general rejoicing itself shows that more is meant in the victory over the accuser of the brethren than simply the redemption of believing souls. It implies that it is a victory in which all heavenly beings have reason to rejoice, as the "casting down" of a common enemy, an assertion of that righteous divine supremacy, upon which the stability of heaven itself, and the perpetuity of blessedness for those who dwell there, is built.—**Woe to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the sea.** An important correction of the Greek text occurs here. The best authorities omit the words, "the inhabiters of," making the passage read: "Woe to the earth and the sea." Lange says: "Hengstenberg rightly refers the *sea* to the sea of nations, and thus, here also, a contrast to it is formed by the *earth* as the theocratic institution and order, as ecclesiastical, and, relatively, ecclesiastico-political authority." We can see no sense in loading down a very plain passage with such pedantic lumber as this. By "the earth and the sea," it is enough to understand the world in which men dwell.—**For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.** We understand by this, simply, that in the changes of the vision, the adversary is seen to take up a new theatre of conflict. The general fact implied is the *persistency* of the dragon in his hostility, and the fact that the defeat of his machinations in one direction only inflames the "wrath" with which he continues the war in another. Other considerations presenting themselves in this connection are noticed in the General Comments.—**Because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.** "His season is short," says Carpenter in Ellicott. "He may be active, sowing tares among the wheat, and animating various hostile powers, such as the wild beasts of ch. 13, but he has only a season; there is a limit to his power and the time of his power."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

In the above exposition we have expressed our dissatisfaction with that view of the "war in heaven" which treats it as "a mysterious series of events in the world of spirits," connected with the revolt and fall of the rebel angels. If it be granted, as perhaps in some sense it should be, that such an occurrence has actually taken place in the moral history of the universe, what proper connection has it with the subject of these visions? That subject is the temporal history of the kingdom of God. The fall of "those angels who kept not their first estate," does not belong to this history, and has no other relation to it than that exceedingly remote one of a revolt in heaven antedating, no one can say by how many ages on ages, the fall of man on earth. If it should be said that it was by the prince of the fallen angels that man himself was drawn into sin, the answer will be that the book we are studying does not concern itself with that event in the very beginning of man's history, but with events belonging to the history of his redemption, and to the

final victory of the good over the evil of God's universe. Is it credible that events lying far back in the fathomless past—possibly before earth and man had existence even—and having only that remote connection with what transpires on earth during the Dispensation whose history is here foreshadowed, should be introduced in the midst of scenes depicting, Apocalyptically, what belongs to the closing periods of the history of our race?

Taking the view suggested in our exposition, the connection seems natural and evident. The figure of the Woman and the birth of the Man-Child, represent on the Apocalyptic scene how through the Church, as the spiritual kingdom of God, an incarnate divine Saviour was given to men. Even as he is born, the Destroyer is seen watching, and ready to "devour" him. The Woman flees into the wilderness, where a shelter is provided for her. So much of the vision rests upon underlying historical fact. But now a scene occurs in which we have presented in a general way, along with what has just appeared, a comprehensive view, anticipative of much that is yet to be disclosed in detail. "The Captain of our Salvation," "Michael," our "prince," is seen, with a great company of faithful ones, encountering and overcoming the vast army of the infernals—the dragon "and his angels." On both sides, these are *representative forms*, as so often in these visions. They represent, on the one side, Christ and his faithful followers, faithful "even unto death," and on the other, the forces, infernal and human, with which, in all ages of earthly history, these must contend. The special allusion, however, is to events occurring at the opening stage of that New Dispensation which was to be throughout a scene of battle such as is described. The issue here depicted of the "war" in this its first outbreak, may be taken as setting forth those *first* results of the struggle, in the opening period of Christian history, when the gospel won such triumphs in the face of such an array of formidable and deadly opposition. In this case, the "casting down" into the earth of the dragon with his angels indicates that the "war" is by no means ended. The enemy is driven off the scene of the present vision, but he is sure to re-appear. In still greater wrath, and in machinations still more deadly, he continues the war, only seeking for it a new theatre. The earth and the sea—the inhabited world—may well beware of him. Taking possession of what is most "earthly" and "sensual," and making it devilish, he will use this—the world-power, in all its forms and forces—to resist, and if possible overthrow, that kingdom of grace and power which means such good for men, such disastrous overthrow for him. Thus is foreshadowed what comes to view, more in detail, in subsequent chapters.

Where the Dragon, or Satan, is called the "Accuser of our brethren," and where these are said to "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony," we understand to be indicated what is most characteristic of him and of them in the relations they sustain, the one to the other. In his dealing with the human race, Satan has always this, as his chief characteristic, that he seeks to ruin man in his relations with God. By as much as he causes sin and all evil to prevail, by so much he brings on men, and on the world, divine displeasure and divine judgment. The persecutions, the cruelties, to which he instigates wicked men, have this for their aim above all—to prevent the reign of righteousness, and disappoint and bring to nought all purposes and plans having in view the supremacy of truth, and the increase of holiness and happiness. Thus he is the "Adversary," the "Accuser," who would call down ruin on mankind by making them like himself, and bringing them into the same condemnation. He is resisted and "overcome" because of "the blood of the Lamb," and because of the witness for Christ and his truth, which the faithful bear. The victory, ultimately to be so complete, is grounded in that atonement for human sin, in which the Redeemer struck such a blow at the very foundations of Satan's kingdom. Through death he has destroyed ("brought to nought") him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Here is the ground of the victory. "The blood of the Lamb" is the hope of the world; and they who "overcome" do so, just because of the shedding of that blood, by which the prayer of faith is made availing, and all endeavor victorious. In the "word of their testimony" these carry the war into the enemy's own territory. It is the weapon of their warfare, made "mighty

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted [a]the woman which brought forth the man *child*.
14 [b]And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, [c]that she might fly [d]into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished [e]for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought
14 forth the man *child*. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,

a ver. 5....*b* Ex. 19: 4....*c* ver. 6....*d* ch. 17: 3....*e* Dan. 7: 25; 12: 17.

through God." They "love not their lives unto the death." Such has been their record in many a stormy period of their history. And so trusting in "the blood," and faithful unto death in their testimony, they overcome.

While the passage considered has this amount of scope, in its general view, we must emphasize its *special* reference to what occurred at the very beginning of the present Dispensation. That triumphant era was a "casting down" of the dragon; a defeat of Satan. "I beheld Satan," said Jesus, "as lightning fall from heaven." Thus did he, himself, in imagery like this in our present text, describe the effect on the kingdom of evil, of his own glorious victory in that which he came to accomplish "through the suffering of death." So far as the words we have been considering reach beyond this, they are *anticipative;* in their more exact, and more limited sense, they describe, in effect, what was before exhibited at the opening of the first seal, and the sounding of the first trumpet.

13-17. THE FLIGHT OF THE WOMAN.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth. When he realized his own discomfiture. **He persecuted the woman which** [who] **brought forth the man-child.** As the birth of the child symbolizes the Incarnation, and as the triumphant issue of the struggle above depicted sets forth the completeness of Christ's redeeming work in his death, resurrection, and ascension, and the wide and glorious victories of a preached gospel in its first ministration, so here we have brought to view that outbreak of persecution, which was an event so momentous in Christian history. These persecutions, indeed, began with the very first preaching of the gospel, as recorded in the beginning of the Acts; but from the time when Paganism, armed with all the power of the Roman Empire, made its assault upon Christianity, during many long, dismal centuries, persecution became a leading fact in the history of the church. These few significant words just quoted give us that fact, summarizing in a single sentence the annals of centuries of suffering for Christ's sake, and at the same time indicating the real author of all persecution. The Dragon, disappointed in his attempt to devour the Child, and now persecuting the Woman—Satan assailing Christ through his church—that is what persecution, pagan or papal, or whatever other form it takes, really means.

14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle. "*The* two wings of *the* great eagle." This perhaps emphasizes the allusion to like imagery in the Old Testament (as in Exodus 19: 3, 4), where God commands Moses to say to the children of Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself"; also in Deut. 32: 11, 12, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him" (Israel). And again in Isaiah 40: 31, we read of those who "mount up with wings as eagles." The article in the corrected translation *may* remind us that the eagle's wings which bore the woman to her place of refuge were those on which the Lord's faithful ones, in all their straits and extremities, are upborne.—**That she might fly into the wilderness.** Thus we have again taken up what was so briefly mentioned in ver. 6. At that point, the vision of the war in heaven, as setting forth high spiritual meanings of the things about to be narrated or foreshadowed in the temporal annals of the kingdom of God, was interposed. The main vision is now resumed, and the woman re-appears, fleeing into the wilderness.—**Into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.** In the sixth verse we read, "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God. that they

15 And the serpent [a]cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

15 from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the

[a] Isa. 59: 19.

should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days." To this prepared "place" she now flees, and is there "nourished." The period of her wilderness state is given in ver. 6 as one thousand two hundred and sixty days; in ver. 14 as a time, times, and half a time; "a season, seasons, and half a season," so Carpenter in Ellicott, translates—one year, two years and half a year, or three and a half years—once more the forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. Here we have another crucial point in the interpretation of our book. In the study of it, much will depend upon what is understood by "the wilderness." The history of that long period which followed the outbreak of wide and general persecution, may help us, if we do not exact too much from it in the way of detailed parallelism. Perhaps no one word would better represent the conditions under which Christianity, especially the true, spiritual Christianity, survived, during the period while persecution was a fact so common and almost inevitable in Christian history, as the word here used, "wilderness." A wilderness life implies hardship, an unsettled abode, a being hunted, outlawed, and oppressed. It is a condition where there may be devious and bewildered wandering, with scarcity of provision, hunger, thirst, and all forms of suffering. It is that which stands in marked contrast with the ordered, safe, and happy manner of life which men choose, and which few are willing to forego, save under the constraint of some strong necessity. The wilderness life of Israel on their way to Canaan is a perfect example of what such a life must always be in like circumstances. The wilderness, however, may be a refuge, as indeed it was to ancient Israel; and one fleeing to it, though he will find danger even there, may be safe from the greater danger that drove him thither. Now, in a general way, this represents the Christian condition during long centuries in which the dragon, and the powers to which he gave "his power, his seat, and great authority," persecuted the church. These powers come before us in chapters immediately subsequent to the present one. Here, in the "wilderness" state of the church, we have a general picture of its subsequent condition. But a distinction seems made between the nominal church and the real one. Even in the wilderness the woman is "nourished"; the wilderness is for her a place of refuge, as she flees "from the face of the serpent." The nominal church, itself, in time becomes a persecutor, as we shall see in subsequent expositions, and the object of this persecution is that "remnant of her," the woman's, "seed" of which we read in ver. 17. In later chapters, we find the apostate church represented as the Harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints. The distinction so implied must be recognized, even here, although only intimated in a remote way. The length of this period of wilderness life is symbolically indicated in the numbers given, the three years and a half, the twelve hundred and sixty days, as before (ch. 11: 2), in the forty-two months of the treading down of the holy city by the Gentiles, as also in ver. 3 of the same chapter, the thousand two hundred and threescore days of the prophesying of the witnesses. It is quite clear that these numbers all relate to the same period. It is the period of the church's wilderness state. Shall we take the numbers given, then, as indicating an exact historical period? In the view of many they should be treated as symbols, like so much else in the book where we find them. Thus, the note of Carpenter, in Ellicott, after characterizing it as the period "of the church's trouble and persecution," adds: "It is not to be sought, by any effort to find some historical period of persecution corresponding in length to that, lasting three years and a half, or twelve hundred and sixty days, or years. No such attempt has hitherto been crowned with success. The period is symbolical of the broken time (the half of the seven, the perfect number) of the tribulation of God's people." The caution, here, is wise, and it is perhaps safer to treat the numbers as symbolical. In an Excursus, however, at the end of this chapter, we offer some tentative suggestions which may be thought worthy of notice, at the other point of view.

15. And the serpent cast out of his

16 And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, [a] and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, [b] which keep the commandments of God, and have [c] the testimony of Jesus Christ.

16 stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river
17 which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testi-

a Gen. 3: 15; ch. 11: 7; 13: 7....b ch. 14: 12....c 1 Cor. 2: 1; 1 John 5: 10; ch. 1: 2, 9; 6: 9; 20: 4.

mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. The more literal translation is: "And the serpent cast out of his mouth behind the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the river." This is supposed to refer to the troubled condition of the Roman Empire, during the period, especially, of the barbarian invasions from the North, and when it might have seemed as if in the general dissolution Christianity itself must perish. The language used shows how in those violent political upheavals of which we so often read in history, more than mere human power and passion are at work. In the imagery of our passage those inundations of barbarous myriads were the "flood" or river, cast out of his mouth by the dragon, that he might destroy the woman.

16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood [*river*] **which the dragon cast out of his mouth.** In the slow process of centuries, and in the operation of those causes through which races blend, revolutions subside into new forms of political and social order, and new civilizations rise out of the ruins of perished old ones, the disturbed condition described in the former verse passed away, and comparative order and quiet was restored. Of this Christianity had the benefit. "The earth helped the woman."

16. And the dragon was wroth with the woman. This recalls the main fact in the representation, and that which explains alike what is already described, and what is to be told in the chapters following. *The wrath of the dragon*, here, is the clue to the whole vast complication of hostilities, outrages, and persecutions.—**And went** [or, *went away*, ἀπῆλθε] **to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have** [*hold*] **the testimony of Jesus Christ.** The better reading is "the testimony of Jesus," omitting "Christ." With those who did *not* keep the commandments of God, and held not the testimony of Jesus, he had no war. These, indeed, as we shall see farther on, he uses as instruments of his war upon "the remnant of the woman's seed"—those faithful ones who in every age have been true and worthy children of her, "whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." (Rom. 9: 4, 5. *Revision.*)

GENERAL COMMENTS.

A few points we must notice in closing the exposition of this chapter. The dragon, seeking to devour the Child, and afterward persecuting the Woman and making war on "the remnant of her seed," suggests two main ideas: (1) That Messiah, the Redeemer, achieves his great work through *suffering*, as the effect of his encounter with that Enemy from whom he comes to deliver; (2) That the history of redemption, and the history of the kingdom of God, in all that it proposes and achieves, is a history of exposure and *conflict;* destruction threatening at the very outset; flight and apparent defeat following, yet ultimating in victory and safety; the Child "caught up to God and to his throne," declaring his supremacy and foreshadowing the result of the struggle. Even in the wilderness the woman is protected and "nourished," and there remains a "remnant of her seed." The "war in heaven" presents the same two main ideas, under another aspect.

Both Auberlen and Lange call attention to the fact that the "one Woman," in this chapter, "has in the end of the days (ch. 17, 18, 19), divided into the antitheses of the Harlot and the Bride." Even in this chapter, as we have seen, the same notable distinction is more remotely indicated; more especially, in the mention made of "the remnant of her seed."

The phrase implies, prophetically, exactly that distinction which, we know from history, in time grew up; when the great body of Christendom apostatized and became itself a "persecuting" power, while only a faithful "remnant" kept the commandments of God, and the "testimony of Jesus." The way is thus prepared for that subsequent representation in which the Woman is seen, in the one character, as the "Mother of Abominations," and in the other, as the glorious and beautiful Bride of the Lord.

Opinions among expositors vary greatly, as to what shall be understood by "the wilderness." The flight of the woman into the wilderness, says Auberlen, "is nothing else but the passing away of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and its introduction among the Gentiles." The wilderness, says Lange, "is the reign of asceticism. She is borne thither," he adds, "upon the wings of the great eagle. A super-terrestrial spirit of renunciation in heroic spirits—existing in a free form, even in the life of John—is the saving power that bears the New Testament Theocracy, the true Church, into the wilderness"—a most unlikely solution. Elliott understands by the wilderness, "the faithful Church's loss of its previous character of catholicity or universality, its invisibility in respect of true Christian public worship, and destitution of all ordinary means of spiritual sustenance"; a view quite as forced and far-fetched as that of Lange. Alford expresses himself as "disposed to interpret the persecution of the woman by the dragon, of the various persecutions by Jews which followed the Ascension, and her flight into the wilderness, of the gradual withdrawal of the Church and her agency from Jerusalem and Judea, finally consummated by the flight to the mountains on the approaching siege, commanded by our Lord himself." Each of these may, indeed, be *included in* the idea of the wilderness; but can either with any propriety be said to exhaust the symbolism? Carpenter understands by the wilderness, in the most general way, "the hard lot which so often becomes the portion of the Lord's people, yet in the midst of which they find unexpected comforts"; as the Psalmist says: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." It would perhaps not be too much to say that each of these expositors indicates *one feature* of that which, taking the symbolism in its proper scope, is the true meaning of the word as here employed. The kingdom of God, having been rejected by the Jews with contempt and persecution, passed over to the Gentiles, as Auberlen points out, and in so doing entered the borders of that wilderness which was to be during so many ages its place of sojourn. The asceticism of Lange was *one feature* of the wilderness state. As Elliott points out, the Church now becomes devoted to externalities, is weakened by heresies and divisions, cuts itself off from sources of "spiritual sustenance," and in the great body of it ceases to be a church at all. This was all foreshadowed, and in some sense typified, in that flight of the Christians into the mountains of Perea, mentioned by Alford, at the time when Jerusalem was "encompassed with armies"; and is itself emblematic of that still wider spiritual fact upon which Carpenter dwells—the wildernesses of Christian trial and temptation, so much a common lot of those who must still encounter "the evil of the world." We can see no reason for singling out any one of these as exhausting a symbolism which seems, in fact, to comprehend them all. The wilderness to which the woman fled was a *condition*, not a *place*, nor is it fully implied in any single historical incident; and what that condition was, the history of Christianity during many centuries, while the Apostasy prevailed, abundantly shows.

EXCURSUS A.—THE FORTY-TWO MONTHS AND TWELVE HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS.

Occasion has been taken at various places in the exposition of this and previous chapters, to express doubts of the possibility of any historical identification of specific periods, as represented by numbers given in this book. It may be, however, that the subject ought not to be dismissed with only the brief notice thus far given to it. Should any readers feel desirous of further study of it, what we here supply may at least afford suggestions as to the elements entering into the question.

Below we give some of the various methods proposed for identifying the numbers so far mentioned in the book; the forty-two months

during which the outer court of the temple should be trodden down of the Gentiles, the twelve hundred and sixty days of the prophesying of the Witnesses, the twelve hundred and sixty days, and the time, times, and a half, during which the Woman should be "nourished" in the wilderness. We trust it is already sufficiently apparent from our exposition, that these numbers all indicate the same period—that of the troubled, persecuted, "wilderness" condition of the church. The Witnesses, during the entire period, "prophesy, clothed in sackcloth"; the outer court of the temple, representing the great body of the church—all of it save that "remnant" of the Woman's "seed," symbolized in one vision by the inner court, or holiest place, is "*trodden down*," subdued under the feet of that godless and hostile antichristian world-power, perpetuated by the great Apostasy—here represented by the word "Gentiles"; while the Woman, during the same period, dwells in her prepared place in the wilderness. In all these ways that now familiar passage in Christian history is brought to view which describes the apostasy, on the one hand, the precarious fortunes of the suffering "remnant" on the other. In the numbers given, is it intended to indicate this period in a precise way, or should the numbers themselves be viewed as symbols?

Our exposition shows that upon the whole we think the latter alternative the safer view. So many attempts at the identification of prophetic numbers, or periods, have disastrously failed, that the safer conclusion seems to be that such identification may never have been intended; but that, instead, we should treat these numbers as in the same way Apocalyptic as other features of the book. Were any attempt to be made on our own part in the *other* line of inquiry, our data and our conclusions would be different from those of any of the writers consulted by us. We suggest the following, as hypothetical and tentative, merely.

The point of difficulty is to determine the date at which the twelve hundred and sixty days, the forty-two months, the three years and a half, shall begin. The days, it is assumed, are the days of prophecy, each standing for a year. Knowing the point of beginning, the terminal point is easily ascertained. It is quite essential, however, that this terminal point shall be such in the events then transpiring as to justify the theory that they do, indeed, mark the *end* of this period of Christian trouble—this wilderness state of the church. Our exposition has made much of that epoch in modern history whose momentousness, every way, so grows upon one the more it is studied—the epoch of the Reformation. Simply by way of experiment one might take some date in that epoch—perhaps the notable one of the year in which Luther publicly declared his position as a reformer, by nailing his celebrated theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg—the year A. D. 1517. Deducting the number twelve hundred and sixty from this, we have as a suggested date for the opening of the period in question, A. D. 257. Or, if it shall be preferred to select some earlier date—say A. D. 1511 or 1510, our point of beginning for the twelve hundred and sixty days will be A. D. 250. To make our experiment seem at all plausible in its result, this latter date ought to be a significant one in its relation to that condition of Christianity represented in our book under the image of the Woman in the wilderness, or the Witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. We shall mention three things connected with that date, and leave them with the reader for such weight in his own conclusions as he may think proper to give them.

The first of these is that it is the date of *the first general persecution.* It was in the year A. D. 249 that the Roman Emperor Decius came to the throne. His predecessor was the emperor Philip, against whom Decius had rebelled, and whom he had dethroned and slain. Gibbon says: "The fall of Philip introduced, with the change of masters, a new system of government so oppressive to the Christians that their former condition, ever since the time of Domitian, was represented as a state of freedom and security compared with the rigorous treatment which they experienced under the short reign of Decius." Considering Gibbon's elaborate depreciation of all that other historians have said of the sufferings of the Christians under pagan persecution, the words we here quote may be taken in their full force. In point of fact, this was the first deliberate and organized effort, on the part of a Roman emperor, to destroy the Christian religion throughout the empire. Nero's per-

secution was limited to the city of Rome; Domitian's was directed chiefly against those prominent Christians, the surviving relatives of our Lord, or those who were supposed to be such, in whom he fancied rivals to his own imperium. Whatever more extensive measures of persecution were contemplated near the close of his reign were cut short by his death. Trajan's persecution was circumscribed in extent, and reached only those who had in some public way abandoned the state religion; the fourth, under Hadrian, was not a governmental matter at all, but was simply the result of riotous outbreaks in some of the cities of Asia Minor; that of Marcus Aurelius was limited and partial; others, until the time of Decius, were in like manner partial, and in some sense incidental. It was Decius who at last realized how the pagan faith and worship were threatened with destruction through the wide and rapid growth of Christianity. By him, for the first time, the effort was distinctly made to completely uproot and destroy the new religion. His successors, Valerian and Diocletian, followed his example. Soon after came the conversion of Constantine, under him the disastrous union of church and state, and then out of this the new forms of assault in which an apostate church became itself the persecutor.

If one, therefore, were to search amidst those early centuries for some date at which to fix the actual beginning of that long war of oppressive antichristian powers against them that "kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus," that which we have named, A. D. 250, would seem as suitable as any other. But the date we name is notable in another respect. Speaking of the interval of twenty years between A. D. 248 and 268, a part of it included in the reign of Decius, Gibbon says: "During that calamitous period, every instant of time was marked, every province of the Roman world was afflicted, by barbarous and military tyrants, and the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution." It was the time of the Gothic invasion, succeeded by so many other inroads of barbarians, under which it appeared at one time as if the very last vestige of the old civilization were about to disappear. It might not seem much out of the way to select this as that point in modern history of which such signal foreshadowings have come before us in previous chapters of this prophecy.

The third circumstance connected with the date named (A. D. 250), which we note for such weight as the judicious reader may think proper to give it, is this: At that point in history, certainly *as well* as at any other, we may locate, in a distinct and definite way, *the origin of the papacy*. Elliott, in *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, evidently assumes that this should be sought in some specific event; either, for example, such as the public claim made, A. D. 431, in the Council of Ephesus, by the legate of Pope Celestine, as "a thing undoubted that the Apostle Peter received the keys and power of binding and loosing, *which* Peter still lives and exercises judgment *in his successors*, even to this day and always," —a claim twenty years later reaffirmed by the legate of Pope Leo, in the Council of Chalcedon,—or in the recognition of this claim by imperial edicts, such as that of the emperor Theodosius in A. D. 380, of Valentinian and Theodosius II. in A. D. 445, or the emperor Justinian in A. D. 533. It is a question whether in an inquiry of this nature it would not be more correct to seek for *the roots* of the great apostasy, rather than to fix upon some particular stage of its *growth*. And those roots would be found in the gradual development of those views of the church and the episcopate, out of which, in point of fact, the whole system of papal usurpation ultimately grew. Of course, since such development is always slow, and more or less hidden, it is not easy to name that point in it which may best be treated as the characteristic and decisive one. And still, something approximate to exactness might be possible. If we were, on our own part, to select any such point, it would perhaps be the age of Cyprian, who became Bishop of Carthage in A. D. 248. Cyprian, it is true, like Jerome and others at a later date, did not always act consistently with his own church theory. The theory itself, however, had no less of historical significance on this account. Cyprian's doctrine upon the subject of the church and the episcopate, as presented in his treatise upon "*The Unity of the Church*," shows what had come to be *authoritative*, if not universally *accepted*, in Christian teaching. We may copy a few brief passages. After having, in one place, quoted our Lord's saying to Peter, of

which so much has long been made (Matt. 16:18, 19), he says: "Although to all the apostles, after the resurrection, he gives an equal power, and says, 'As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto him, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they shall be retained'—yet, that he might set forth unity, he arranged by his authority the origin of that unity, *as beginning from one*"; that is, from Peter. "Assuredly," he goes on, "the rest of the apostles were also, the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honor and of power; but the beginning proceeds from unity; which one church, also, the Holy Spirit in the Song of Songs designated in the person of our Lord, and says, 'My dove, my spotless one, is but one. She is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bare her.' Does he who does not hold this unity of the church think that he holds the faith?" From this, then, he argues that for him who is not in this one, indivisible church, salvation is impossible. What enormous structures of hierarchical usurpation have been built upon this one principle, no student of Christian history need be told. In like manner, Cyprian holds "the episcopate itself to be one and undivided." And he adds, "Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a falsehood; let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication. The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole." It is not necessary to suppose that either Cyprian or others understood the bearing of their own principles, as regards the church and the episcopate; least of all can they have foreseen to what despotic uses their teaching and the authority of their great names would be applied. It is all the same true that, in the growth of ideas such as these which we quote from him, the Great Apostasy had its root. Could we fix upon any date as more likely to be Apocalyptically foreseen as that at which the "wilderness" state of the church should begin than that of the age of Cyprian?

Three main causes of disturbance, corruption, and those widely prevalent evils and sufferings which characterize that state, come thus distinctly forth upon the scene of history in the same general period—hierarchical and ecclesiastical usurpation; persecution, deliberate, systematic, and with express purpose to root out the pure faith of the gospel; and political and national anarchy, superinduced by barbaric invasions which make the whole of Europe, for a succession of centuries, a "wilderness" indeed. If we may date, now, the beginning of the twelve hundred and sixty days, or years, at this point, the middle of the third century, say A. D. 250, we shall find the period in question closing at the epoch of the Reformation—an epoch, next to that of the Saviour's advent itself, most auspicious for Christianity and the world.

The above suggestions we leave with the reader, for such entertainment, be it less or more, as they may fairly claim. It will be proper, however, to connect with them some notice of other theories proposed, as to the beginning and ending of the forty-two months, the twelve hundred and sixty days, the time, times and a half (three and a half years). The learned Joseph Mede, whose writings upon the Apocalypse appeared between the middle and close of the last century, begins by claiming it as demonstrated, "out of Ezekiel's measures," that the outer court of the temple "contained the inner court three times and a half in quantity," and that in accordance with this, "the time, forty-two months, allotted to the profanation of the outer court, should contain the times of the inner court thrice and a half." Forty-two months are three and a half years; so that "the times of the inner court" should be one year, or three hundred and sixty days—"each day for a year." From which he concludes that "the visible church continued in the primitive purity of Christian worship, answerable to the divine measure, three hundred and sixty years," or adding the five "*dies embolismales*," three hundred and sixty-five years. About A. D. 365, he claims, "began the idolatry of relics and saint-worship to enter." This, however, supposes that the reckoning of the three hundred and sixty-five years is from the birth of our Lord. If the point of beginning be the date of his suffering, then by the received chronology we must begin the twelve hundred and sixty days at A. D. 393; if at the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, the date of beginning will be A. D. 430; if from the date at which the Apocalypse was revealed to John, it will be A. D. 454. At nearly the last-named date, A. D. 476, the western empire finally

CHAPTER XIII.

AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw [a] a beast rise up out of the sea, [b] having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the [c] name of blasphemy.

1 mony of Jesus: and [1] he stood upon the sand of the sea.

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten dia-

a Dan. 7 : 2, 7....b ch. 12 : 3; 17 : 3, 9, 12....c Or, *names*; ch. 17 : 3.——1 Some ancient authorities read, *I stood, etc.*, connecting the clause with what follows.

passed away. It is clear that there is here no satisfactory point of departure, and upon adding the twelve hundred and sixty days to the several dates above named, the reader conversant with history will see that the point to which we proceed remains in an equally unsatisfactory state.

Elliott, in *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, selects for the point of beginning, A. D. 533, the date of the celebrated letter of the emperor Justinian to the Pope, in which the latter was formally recognized as head of the church. Adding the twelve hundred and sixty years, and we are brought to the date of the French Revolution. The reader will readily understand that it needs all Elliott's ingenuity to make *this* seem like the epoch of deliverance and triumph which the prophecy imports.

Bengel's theories as to the interpretation of Apocalyptic numbers have been completely discredited by the result. As a significant example, however, of the mistakes that very learned and entirely sincere men have made in dealing with matters of this kind, we may note what he proposes upon the matter in hand. His point of departure is the determination of the value of a prophetic year. With this view, he takes the number 666 in ch. 13: 18, and comparing it with the forty-two months given in ver. 5 of the same chapter as the period during which the beast should "continue," he decides that the two numbers correspond, and that they each represent "the time of the beast." He then divides six hundred and sixty-six, which he regards as six hundred and sixty-six days (or years), by forty-two, and finds, as the result, that a prophetic month is fifteen and six-sevenths days (years). Neglecting the fraction, he decides that a prophetic day is about half a year. Proceeding upon this basis, he finds that "twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days are six hundred and fifty-seven full ordinary years." He then takes for his point of departure the year A. D. 864, and adding 657, finds the twelve hundred and sixty days closing in A. D. 1521. It was in A. D. 864, he claims, that "the woman obtained a *firm* place in the wilderness, in Europe, especially in Bohemia; and there, in particular, she was fed, until more free and more abundant food was vouchsafed to her by means of the Reformation. The close of the one thousand two hundred and sixty days is the Reformation."

In what we have written above, in the first part of this Excursus, it has not been our purpose to add another to the list of confidently proposed solutions of the question in hand. We aim simply to offer suggestions, or what we may call hypothetical tests, for the use of any who may be interested in inquiries of this nature, or who may think them essential in a comment upon books like the Apocalypse.

THE REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST.

1-10. THE WILD BEAST OUT OF THE SEA. **And I stood upon the sand of the sea.** According to the corrected reading by best manuscripts it should read "*he* stood" (ἐστάθη), meaning the dragon. It will be noticed that the Revised Version also places the words: "and he stood upon the sand of the sea," at the close of the last chapter. Their most natural connection, indeed, would seem to be with the seventeenth verse of that chapter: still, they have also a connection with what follows in the present, although a remoter, and, perhaps, less obvious one. The arrangement which places these words at the seventeenth verse of chapter twelve seems to be, upon the whole, preferable, while it is also according to the best manuscript authority. "The sea" is by most interpreters—Düsterdieck, however, strongly objecting—taken symbolically; as representing "the great, restless mass of human kind." (Carpenter, in Ellicott): "the billowy life of peoples." (Lange): "the sea of nations." (Victorinus and many others): "Europe." (Bengel): "the commotions then taking place in the world." (Thomas Scott). It should be kept in mind, however, that in the

2 [a]And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, [b]and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, [c]and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and [d]the dragon gave him his power, [e]and his seat, [f]and great authority.

2 dems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his

a Dan. 7: 6....b Dan. 7: 5....c Dan. 7: 4....d ch. 12: 9....e ch. 16: 10....f ch. 12: 14.

vision a sea *appears*, which, although it be one feature of a vision, is wholly real to John as he gazes upon it, while on the "sand," or shore of the sea, he beholds the dragon standing. The Apocalyptic significance of what he beholds, is another thing.—**And saw a beast rise** ["rising," in Greek the present participle] **up out of the sea.** Adopting the rendering, "and he stood upon the sand of the sea," we must change these following words to, "and *I saw*," etc. Of the beast which thus rises we shall speak directly. For the present it suffices to note the force of the word in the Greek (θηρίον), "wild beast." A distinction is to be noted between it and the word which denotes the animal nature, simply (ζῶον); or, as Carpenter expresses it, the former (θηρίον), is a word which "makes the beast nature predominant." The word in this place implies ferocity and destructiveness. —**Having seven heads and ten horns.** "Having ten horns and seven heads," in the corrected reading. The numbers, here, might be treated as pure symbols, each expressing in its own way the idea of completeness—that the formidable power represented combines all the elements essential alike to its nature and its operations; *seven* expressing this idea of completeness in a general way, and *ten* the same idea in specific applications to what is worldly, especially that which relates to nations and their rulers. Reasons will appear below, however, for at least associating with this general symbolism what is more actual and historical.—**And upon his horns ten crowns.** "Diadems," may indicate better the exact meaning. They are, as in the case of the dragon, symbols of sovereignty.—**And upon his heads the name of blasphemy.** The Alexandrine manuscript reads "names" (ὀνόματα). Westcott and Hort adopt this reading in their Greek text, and the revision follows it in the translation. The whole clause will then read, "having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy."

2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. Important help, now, may be obtained in the interpretation of the entire passage, with the words immediately in hand, by a reference to Dan. 7: 1–6. In the vision there described is "a sea," upon which "the four winds of heaven strive"—a representation of the stormy, tumultuous, national life of the world. Three beasts are seen to arise out of the sea, one like a lion, another like a bear, the third like a leopard. In the vision which John sees, these three are united in one. The bestial forms in Daniel are understood to represent, the first the Chaldean kingdom, the second the Medo-Persian, the third the Grecian. After these kingdoms was to come a fourth, recognized as the Roman, and represented in the vision by "a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly." Turning to John's vision, we find, as above said, the three first beasts of Daniel's vision combined in one—leopard, bear, and lion. John's vision, therefore, so far blends in a single representation the bestial forms in that of Daniel. The characteristic feature in the vision of John is the *grouping* or blending of the symbolical forms seen; while in Daniel it is their *individualization*. Where, then, in John's grouping of many in one, shall we find Daniel's fourth beast? It will be noticed that Daniel does not compare his fourth beast to any one animal form, as in the case of the others; but describes it in general terms only. It is "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly." We may first notice what Auberlen says upon this: "His," John's, "beast rises up out of the sea, as the four beasts of Daniel; it has ten horns, like Daniel's fourth beast; finally, it is composed of lion, bear, and leopard: that is, of the Danielic beasts. The fourth beast, it is true, is not mentioned, because it cannot be compared with any other; but it is indicated by the ten horns." If we follow Auberlen, then, the head, in John's vision, which bears the ten horns, will correspond with Daniel's fourth beast. Auberlen represents this as the seventh head, by which he understands "the

Germano-Slavonic Kingdom," or group of kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire upon its dissolution broke up, or which embraced, in a general way, the territory which the empire had covered. Viewing the seven heads as representing seven world-powers, which in history appear as hostile to the people and kingdom of God, he names them as follows: "1. Egypt, 2. Assyria, 3. Babylon, 4. Medo-Persia, 5. Greece. The Roman is the sixth, and the Germano-Slavonic Kingdom is the seventh." With this view, Ellicott's commentary seems in the main to agree. In the note upon the parallel passage in ch. 17: 10, of our book, it says: "Daniel saw four wild beasts arise from the sea; they represented the three great world-powers, Babylon, and its three successors, Persia, Greece, and Rome. This is a guide to us here, as most commentators admit; but two great world-powers had preceded Babylon, viz., Egypt and Assyria; these figure in the ancient prophecies as forces hostile to the righteous King. St. John, whose visions took the range of the world's drama, could not see the representative of the ever-rising spirit of worldly hostility to God's chosen, without seeing Egypt and Assyria included. The voices of Moses and Isaiah called to him across the centuries that in these the world-principle of that day found its clearest and strongest manifestation. In various empires the world-power showed itself: in Egypt, the house of bondage (Ex. 20: 2); in Assyria, that exalted herself against God (Isa. 37: 23); in Babylon, the hammer of the whole earth (Jer. 50: 23); in Persia and in Greece; and in succession these kingdoms fell, only to be succeeded by another—Rome. Five fell [ch. 17: 10]; the one is. But what is the seventh, the other which is yet to come? We must recall the appearance of the wild beast. It had seven heads and ten horns. Where were these ten horns? It seems generally admitted that they were all on the seventh head. The seventh head, which represents the seventh kingdom, or manifestation of the world-principle which is described [in ch. 17: 10] as not yet come, then, was different in appearance from the others. It was ten-horned. It had not the same unity of appearance as the others. Now the ten horns are explained as ten kings, or minor powers [17: 12]. The conclusion, therefore, is that the seventh head must be rather an aggregation of monarchies than a single universal empire. This agrees with Daniel's prophecy that out of the fourth kingdom, which corresponds, as we have seen, with the sixth head of the wild beast here, ten kings should arise (Dan. 7: 7, 23, 24)." By this aggregation of monarchies, the writer quoted seems to mean the same as Auberlen means in speaking of the "Germano-Slavonic Kingdom." It is, as we have already said, that "aggregation of monarchies" which on the fall of the Roman Empire by degrees arose in Europe—all ultimately subject to the Papacy, and filled with its antichristian spirit. The *Speaker's Commentary* summarizes its own view thus: "The four forms of worldly dominion which Daniel had symbolized separately are here combined into one form, representing the universal world-power; and of that one form the empire of Pagan Rome, as the seer beheld it, supplied the outline."

It would be easy to fill pages with the theories of interpretation for this part of our work, furnished by different writers, ancient and modern. We shall not confuse the reader with them. That which is given above, and in which the three authorities quoted mainly agree, is the only one consistent with the principle of interpretation followed in our own exposition throughout the book, and in which the symbolical figures on the Apocalyptic scene are regarded as representative of *forces*, rather than of individual personages, or of distinct organisms, whether national or other. Now, it is to be observed that however differing in other respects, the great powers named above agreed in this—that their attitude toward that beneficent force in this world which we term the kingdom of God, was ever one of bitter hostility. Whatever nation or organism represented in any age that kingdom was with these hostile powers an object of attack. So it was with ancient Israel. So it was with Christianity and the Christian Church when these appeared. If ever Israel was for the time in alliance with any one of these powers, it was always an alliance unnatural, pernicious in result, and disapproved of God. When between Christianity and the Roman State a like alliance occurred, this also was unnatural, unchristian, and in its consequences disastrous. Between the "light" of God's spiritual kingdom and

3 And I saw one of his heads [a]as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and [c]all the world wondered after the beast.

3 power, and his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as though it had been [1]smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and

a ver. 12: 14....b ch. 17: 8.—1 Gr. *slain.*

the "darkness" of that world-spirit which ever dwells in and animates the great world-forces; between the "Christ" of the one and the "Belial" of the other, there has never been any possibility of such a "yoking together" as God can approve or the certain effects will justify. Alike hostile in spirit and purpose was that papal power which came in the place of the pagan one, and which was in the dominant political forces of the Middle Ages, what Paganism had been during all the centuries of the ancient world. So that the ten horns of the seventh head, although representing monarchies nominally Christian, really belong to the same general grouping of world-powers hostile to the true kingdom and the true people of God. It is, therefore, this one great, pervading force, or principle, embodied in so many differing and yet resembling ways, which we understand to be before us in the first beast of the Apocalypse. Thus viewed, this beast becomes *antichrist*, in his *worldly*, not spiritual manifestation. These world-powers stood opposed to the kingdom of God, not alone, perhaps not so much upon religious, as upon political grounds. It was in the interest of their own despotism that they made war upon the truth and the people of God, because discerning in these the revelation of a principle hostile to the world-principle, in its assertion that God in Christ is "*King* of kings and *Lord* of lords." And this explains the words quoted above, but not commented upon at length: "Upon his heads names of blasphemy." Every one of these great world-powers, each represented in the monarch who filled the throne, asserted for itself the dominion, and often even the divine titles, which belong to God alone. It was in this spirit that Nebuchadnezzar made his impious boast, "Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty?" Then it was that the word came to him: "The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, *until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he wills.*" The blasphemy of Nebuchadnezzar, thus rebuked and punished, equally characterized all those selfish, bloody, and impious despots who cursed the earth with their tyranny during successive centuries, and whose claim to such supremacy as they asserted was a perpetual defiance cast in the face of God. It reached its climax in those Roman Emperors who even claimed to be gods, and demanded that divine honors should be paid to them even while living. In all these things we have what is symbolized in the "names of blasphemy" on the seven heads of the beast; the seven heads alone being here mentioned in that connection, while in the seventeenth chapter the whole beast is described as "full of names of blasphemy." A more full treatment of the general subject of the symbolism here, as also that of the second beast, we offer in the Excursus upon Antichrist at the end of this chapter.—**And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat** [*throne*]**, and great authority.** By this is indicated, as already pointed out, that this despotism, especially in its war upon the people and the truth of God, is but the representative and the instrument of the great enemy of both God and man. The antichristian spirit, whatever its form and manifestation, is devilish. It is important to note, at this point, the continued presence and activity of the dragon, or Satan. He does not now retire from the scene. The earth and human life remain the theatre of his activity, until the strong angel from heaven binds him in chains and makes the abyss his prison.

3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death. The words, "I saw," are not in the Greek, and should be marked as *supplied* in the translation. Assuming the correctness of what has been said, above, in the identification of the beast, with its seven heads, the evident interpretation of the words now before us is, that they point to that event, so signal in itself, and so vast in its consequences, the destruction of the Ro-

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, [a]Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him [b]a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue [c]forty *and* two months.

4 the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to

5 war with him? and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority [1]to continue forty and

a ch. 18:18....b Dan. 7:8; 11:25; 11:36....c ch. 11:2; 13:6.——1 Or, *to do* his works *during*. See Dan. 11:28.

man Empire in its *pagan* form. We should note, however, the qualifying expression, "as it were." It *seemed* a wounding unto death. **—And his deadly wound was healed.** Rome lived on, under a new form and new names. Even the paganism of the old empire was renewed in the idolatries of the Roman Church. Its spirit essentially survived even in the Christian Empire founded by Constantine; much more in that later one which, originating with Charlemagne, was during so many centuries confederate with the Papacy. In the Papacy itself it survived, and even as a world-power; for the popes, to this very moment, have always made much of their temporal sovereignty, and have been, so far as this, among the most haughty, most exacting, most domineering of temporal princes. The deadly wound was healed. The world-old Antichrist did not die.—**And all the world wondered after the beast.** Despotism has always been able to command the homage of that worldly spirit to which in so many ways it makes appeal. Men pay obeisance to the very name of king or emperor. They are captivated by the splendors of royalty. The palace, the throne, the gorgeous retinue, the very tinsel of the humblest retainer, dazzles them. They "wonder after" a power which after all is "the beast," and only because the god of this world has blinded their eyes.

4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast. "*Because he gave his* power unto the beast," is the better reading. It is the worst feature of despotism, and ever has been, that it corrupts, while it oppresses. The subjects of it, denied the exercise of those rights which imply the higher attributes of manhood, deteriorate, in the very act of becoming subservient. Too often they become "worldly, sensual, devilish," and in that spirit "worship the dragon." **—And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?** A graphic picture of the servility of spirit in which the world has consented to the domination of a power whose right of rule was neither "divine," since it came, not from God, but from the enemy of God; nor by any human choice, since consent was never asked; nor is justified by its fruits, since these were, not the happiness and elevation, but the misery and degradation, of those whom it both ruled and oppressed; yet which, century after century, continued to impose upon human weakness and depravity, and by force of mere iniquity maintained its supremacy. There came a time, indeed, when men learned to understand at once their own rights and the nature of that usurpation in which these had so long been denied them. Yet until that time came —and how long it was in coming!—"all the world wondered after the beast." None dared withstand him; for they said, "Who is able to make war with him?"

5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. This, evidently, alludes to the beast, in his whole embodiment, to Antichrist, here especially seen in his worldly manifestation, though equally, and even more true of him, in his spiritual one. The great things and the blasphemies are the *pretensions* of this haughty, usurping, God-defying, and man-enslaving power. Compare with this Dan. 7:8, where speaking of the "little horn" which "came up among" the ten horns described by him, Daniel says: "And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." This is the characteristic, always, of the world-power, the beast, when filled with the dragon-spirit.—**And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.** The Greek word translated "continue" (ποιῆσαι), means, here, more properly, to "act," or "do." Accordingly, in the margin of the revision, we find, "*to do* his works." The difference in meaning is important. What is spoken of is not the absolute *duration* of this world-power in its whole embodiment, from the beginning to

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, [a] and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
7 And it was given unto him [b] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: [c] and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

6 two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, *even* them that [1] dwell in the heaven.
7 [2] And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and

a John 1: 14; Col. 2: 9....*b* Dan. 7: 21; ch. 11: 7; 12: 17....*c* ch. 11: 18; 17: 15.—1 Gr. *tabernacle*....2 Some ancient authorities omit, *And it was given . . . overcome them.*

the end. This might be said to comprehend well nigh the whole period of human history. The forty and two months are the period during which this bestial power in that especial form in which John sees it, with its sixth Roman head, and its seventh head with the ten horns—concentrating and consummating the sinister world-power of all former ages, as well as those of its own—should "act," should be allowed to exercise the power permitted to it in opposing and seeking to destroy. It is, again, the period of the *ordeal*, so often already brought before us in this book. Should any prefer the theory that aims at the definite indentification of this period, we may refer them to the "Excursus," at the close of the last chapter. The view of Lange, however, may be preferred, when he says: "These periods are not to be chronologically calculated; still less are they to be conformed to each other [for our own part, we find them necessarily "conformed to each other," having reference, in all these instances, to the same season of trial for the church and people of God]; the distinction is in the choice of form. The forty-two months constitute a changeful time of tribulation, in which the number of rest and joy is continually crossed by the number of toil and distress, (7×6)." The word "given" must not be misapprehended. It is "given" in the sense of "permitted," "allowed." It is the permissive providence of God, in its long-suffering patience, and with a view to infinitely wise ends, giving rein and scope for a time to the kingdom of evil and of darkness.

6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God. Even as a world-power, Antichrist is a hideous impiety.—**To blaspheme his name.** Deny and dishonor the supremacy, and the very being and person of God.—**And his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.** The best Greek text omits the "and" (καὶ); so that the literal translation will be "his tabernacle, those dwelling [or, 'tabernacling,' the word for 'tabernacle'—and 'dwell' being one the noun, and the other the verb, from the same root] in heaven." The revision reads, it will be noticed: "His tabernacle, *even* [this word being supplied] those that dwell in heaven." The two clauses are thus in apposition. Alford understands by those that tabernacle in heaven, the angels of God. Lange says: "Not only is God's work of grace in Christians who are yet in this world blasphemed, as a recognized reality; but the inhabitants of the world beyond are themselves, likewise, blasphemed as vain shadows, or as men who, for a phantom hope, have sacrificed their pretensions to this present life." The comment in Ellicott is: "The saints, to whom the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and who have a tabernacle of witness in this wilderness world, can yet tabernacle their spirits where their treasure is, in the heaven, according to that word, 'our citizenship is even now in heaven' (Phil. 3: 20)." Alford's view seems inadmissible; since the mention of "tabernacle" implies a pilgrim state, such as is true of Christians in this world, and has once been true of the saved in heaven; but is not and never was true of angels. What seems to be meant by blaspheming the tabernacle of God, is casting contempt upon all those spiritual mercies of God, through which his people are redeemed and kept while pilgrims in this present evil world; and by blaspheming them in heaven, the despising and reviling of that heavenly hope, in the fruition of which the redeemed of God are made safe and happy with him forever.

7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints. "Given" in the sense of "permitted."—**And to overcome them.** Oppression and persecution long seemed to have their own way in this world, as if the antichristian world-power were stronger than God himself. But this was only because it pleased God to so "permit," for a season. In the margin of the revision will be seen the words, "The Greek text in this verse is uncertain." Westcott and Hort, accordingly, place in brackets the Greek for the words,

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, [a]whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain [b]from the foundation of the world.
9 [c]If any man have an ear, let him hear.
10 [d]He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: [e]he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. [f]Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

8 tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, *every one* whose name hath not been [1]written from the foundation of the world in
9 the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain. If
10 any man hath an ear, let him hear. [2]If any man [3]*is* for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the [4]patience and the faith of the saints.

a Ex. 32:32; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; ch. 3:5; 20:12, 15; 21:27....b ch. 17:8....c ch. 2:7....d Isa. 33:1....e Gen. 9:6; Matt. 26:52....f ch. 14:12.——1 Or, *written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world*....2 The Greek text in this verse is somewhat uncertain... 3 Or, leadeth *into captivity*....4 Or, *stedfastness*.

"And it was given him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." There seems, however, to be only uncertainty as to whether these words really belong to the text. As the reasons for omitting are not conclusive, it is best perhaps to retain them.—**And power** [*authority*] **was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations** [every kindred, and tongue, and nation]. How completely, during long centuries, the world was trampled down by this godless power, is a well-known fact of history. So it was "given," "permitted," in that "mystery of God" which human reason, quite in vain, seeks of itself to fathom or explain.

8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not [every one whose name hath not been] **written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.** A most important exception is here implied. Even during the supremacy of this wild beast out of the sea, this reign of the godless and God-defying world-power, there were some whose names were written in "the book of life of the Lamb." This is implied in the statement that all *save* these worshiped the beast. These are the witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth; they are named to us, again, in the symbol of the temple's inner court; they are the faithful "remnant" of the "seed" of the woman. These do *not* worship the beast. Here is the one ray of relieving light traversing those centuries of darkness. The order of the clauses in this verse is somewhat changed, as will be observed, in the revision. The margin retains the same order as in the common version; the text, however, is made to read: "every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain." If this translation be preferred, it implies the doctrine of the eternal election of the redeemed; if that of the common version be chosen, it presents to view that eternal covenant of the Father and the Son, in which redemption was provided. "From the foundation of the world," is the New Testament mode of representing what took place in the remote past, before time, as measured in the periods of this world, had existence. We notice that the order of clauses in the revision, as given above, is that preferred by the American revisers. The English revisers place the marginal reading in the text, and remove the rendering here given to the margin. In deciding upon this order (which also is adopted by Hengstenberg, Düsterdieck, and others, while Carpenter, in Ellicott, and Lange prefer the other), the American revisers may have had some reference to ch. 17:8, where we read, "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world," and which seem to be a repeating of what is said here. The structure of the Greek in our present passage allows of either rendering; the parallel passage at 17:8 seems, however, to favor the changed order of the clauses.

9. If any man have an ear, let him hear. The solemn call to attention so frequent in this book.

10. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. The change of translation, here, is important: "If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed"—so the revision. Alford translates: "If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any to be slain with the sword. he should be slain with the sword." Carpenter's is, for substance, the same. The text followed by these two writers uses the Greek word for "kill" in the passive voice and infinitive mood. The text of Westcott and Hort, which the revisers follow, and also of Tischendorf,

11 And I beheld another beast *coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake

a ch. 11: 7.

gives the indicative future of the active voice, with an alternative present indicative active in the margin. This text gives the latest revision, and is probably safest to follow. Adopting the translation of the revision, the sense will be not materially different from that assigned to the words in Ellicott, where they are taken as "a caution to the suffering saints . . . that the way of the church's victory lay through suffering captivity and meeting the sword, and that the temptation to take the sword, or seize the weapons of their foes, would be fatal to their true success." Hence the force of the words which follow.—**Here is the patience** [*endurance, steadfastness*] **and the faith of the saints.** In this way shall their endurance unto the end, their faith in God, and their patient waiting for him be tried.

11-18. The Wild Beast Out of the Earth.

11. And I beheld another beast, coming up out of the earth. Alford's notice of the resemblances and differences of the two beasts in this chapter brings out the chief points so clearly that we copy his words here: "(1) These two beasts are identical as to genus; they are both ravaging powers (*θηρία*), hostile to God's flock and fold. (2) They are diverse in origin. The former comes up out of the sea; that is, if we go back to the symbolism of Daniel, is an empire, rising up out of confusion into order and life; the latter comes out of the earth, *i. e.*, we may not unreasonably say, arises out of human society and its progress; which as interpreted by the context, will import its origin and gradual development during the reign and progress of the secular empire denoted by the former beast. (3) The second beast is, in its zeal and action, entirely subsidiary to the first. It wields its authority, works miracles in its support, causes men to make and to worship its image; nay, itself is lost in the splendor and importance of the other. (4) An important distinction exists between the two beasts, in that the second one has two horns like a lamb. In other words, this second beast puts on a mild and lamb-like appearance, which the other does not. But it speaks as a dragon; its words, which carry its real character, are fierce and unrelenting; while it professes that which is gentle, its behests are cruel." As in our own exposition, he views the first beast as representing, "not the Roman Empire merely, but the aggregate of all the empires of this world as opposed to Christ and his kingdom." The Roman Empire, distinctively, he finds represented in the sixth head of the beast, which "was crushed, and to all appearance, exterminated." The deadly wound so made, however, was healed "in the establishment of the Christian Roman Empire." It is important that we make especial note of the fact that the first beast in its entirety, represents, not any one hostile world-power, but the "aggregation" of such in all ages up to the time when the Roman power appeared, flourished, reigned, and fell, and including that power itself. In other words, represents that mighty evil principle of tyrannous hostility which has appeared and re-appeared from age to age, always, however diverse in form, identical in spirit. As will be seen presently, this same power again re-appears in the wild beast out of the earth, with resemblances and differences which may leave us in no doubt as to its own identification.—**And he had two horns, like a lamb.** This first item in the description is specially important. Indeed, it marks the only point of real and radical difference between this beast and the former one. The first beast exhibited in its whole exterior the ferocity and destructiveness of its nature. This one put on a symbol of gentleness and mildness; assumes, indeed, in some part of its exterior, the semblance of that one among animals which is most gentle and harmless, and which stands as a type of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" himself. It is clear, therefore, that this second embodiment of the antichristian principle *assumes* to be itself Christian; its pretensions are to represent all that is *most* Christian.—**And he spake as a dragon.** His voice betrays him. It would be hard to imagine two wider opposites than the lamb-like pretense and the dragon reality.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, [a] whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And [b] he doeth great wonders, [e] so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And [d] deceiveth them that dwell on the earth [e] by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, [f] and did live.

12 as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first
13 beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight
14 of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and

a ver. 3....b Deut. 13 : 1, 2, 3; Matt. 24 : 24; 2 Thess. 2 : 9; ch. 16 : 14....c 1 Kings 18 : 38; 2 Kings 1 : 10, 12....d ch. 12 : 19; 19 : 20. ....e 2 Thess. 2 : 9, 10....f 2 Kings 20 : 7.

It is the combination of hypocrisy with ferocity, and each in its utmost extreme.

12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him. Though differing in form and in origin, the two beasts are in spirit, purpose, and effect, identical. The "power" spoken of is power in the sense of "authority," and the word is so translated in the revision. "Before him" means in his presence, or in his sight. The first beast, evidently, does not pass from the scene, but is still present. The second beast does not *succeed* him, but reigns jointly with him, only with even superior "authority," as if usurping even that "bad eminence." Yet it is usurpation of a peculiar kind. He "exercises the authority" of the first beast in the interest of that beast.—For he **causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.** The idea given us, then, of these two beasts is, that though the one is a growth out of the disorderly and tumultuous national life of the world, while the other represents some new principle of organization, in which pretension is made to what is Christian in spirit and in fact, yet they embody one and the same evil principle; while that which is later in origin, although exercising the "authority" of the former one, to some extent even as usurping it, nevertheless seeks the same bad end, aiming to promote in the world the same supremacy of evil. In other words, this power represented by the second beast, while it professes to be Christian, is itself worldly; and while in pretense exercising power in the interests of Christ's kingdom, in truth seeks to promote, and does promote, that same antichristian usurpation which, age after age, oppressed the earth, defied God, and on all its seven heads carried the "names of blasphemy."

13. And he doeth great wonders. In a vision all the *appearances* seem to be *real.* It does not, therefore, consist with the Apocalyptic character of the representation here, that even any intimation should be given of the unreality of these "wonders," or "signs," further than is afforded in the next verse, where it is said that in all the beast is a deceiver. The word for wonders (σημεῖα) is one of the words commonly used in the New Testament to denote real miracles. These in the vision *appear* to be real, and are accordingly spoken of in that light.—**So that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth** [*unto* the earth] **in the sight of men.** This appears to be an allusion to what took place on Mount Carmel, in the times of Ahab and Elijah, when the prophetical mission of the latter was justified, in opposition to Baal and his prophets, by the fire that came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice on the altar. In the vision, the second beast is seen performing a like wonder, with a view to establish his claim to be even more than the messenger and representative of God on earth—his vicegerent. This second beast, then, is a power which makes this claim, and in support of it professes to work those miracles by which, in ages past, the prophets and messengers of God have been recognized as sent of him.

14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of [*the presence of*] **the beast.** The text, as corrected by best authorities, should be translated: "the signs which it was given [permitted] him to do" (τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι). Clearly, it is not meant that these were real miracles, however they may have *seemed*, in the vision, to be such. It may be an open question whether some supernatural power, of an evil kind, may not have been exercised by

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, [a] and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, [b] to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

15 lived. And it was given *unto him* to give breath to it, *even* to the image of the beast, [1] that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should
16 be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their

a ch. 16: 2; 19: 20; 20: 4....*b* ch. 14: 9; 19: 20; 20: 4.——1 Some ancient authorities read, *that even the image of the beast should speak; and he shall cause, etc.*

those who in different ages of the world, by arts such as these here alluded to, have deceived "them that dwell on the earth." However this may be, that the "great wonders" here spoken of were in no sense such miracles as those by which Christian truth is sustained, is clear. And while, as we shall see in the end, the identification of this second wild beast is so certain, we find alike in the character he bears, and in the terms in which the "signs" he was permitted to do are here spoken of, abundant testimony to the real nature of these lying wonders.—**Saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword** [*the stroke of the sword*] **and did live.** This renewed mention of the "deadly wound" that was "healed," seems to emphasize that incident, as being in itself remarkable, and as characterizing in a peculiar way, the first beast, as he appears in the vision. The persistency of the antichristian principle, in this world, in its war upon God and his people, is, indeed, one of the most remarkable facts of history. Wounded unto death in one form, it never fails to reappear in another. When the empire itself became Christian, and the emperor, in the insignia of royalty, was seen presiding in a Christian council, and lending the whole strength of the imperial authority to enforce its decrees, it must have seemed as if Christianity had at last triumphed in truth. The Christian imperium was itself antichristian, and lent itself to that new form of the same godless principle which appeared in the great antichristian apostasy, in its confederacy with the dragon to make war upon the woman, and upon "the remnant of her seed." Antichrist had not died. For those whom the second beast—the new manifestation of the old evil principle—succeeded in deceiving, were taught to worship, not himself, but his "image." The power which the Roman Church claimed and exercised was not the old Roman imperium, but its *semblance.* And in reproducing it, in that sense, and exercising it under the mask of a so-called Christian hierarchy, it reproduced, also, under similar Christian guises, the Roman Paganism. Its masses, its festivals, its worship of the virgin, and saints, and of images—these are none of them Christian. They are the old pagan idolatry under new forms. That which Romanism at one time deceived all Europe into worshiping was, thus, "the image of the beast which had the stroke of the sword and lived."

15. And he had power [*it was given* to him] **to give life** [spirit, πνεῦμα] **unto the image of the beast.** Never was Antichrist more truly alive than while the papal supremacy lasted.—**That the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.** That dragon voice which was heard in the world through all former ages of oppression, of cruel warfare upon all that maintained the cause of truth, and righteousness, and God, was heard again in this new revelation of Antichrist. And the same deeds of murder were re-enacted, upon even a more monstrous scale. By no pagan power, in its hostility to the kingdom of God, were such cruelties practiced as by antichristian Christianity, itself.

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. The more exact translation of the new revision may be seen above. The sense, however, is not altered by the change of rendering. What, then, was this "mark of the beast"? In ancient times, slaves received a brand, or mark, upon the forehead, hand, or some other part of the body, indicative of the ownership of their masters. In ch. 7: 3, we find the servants of God thus receiving a mark in their foreheads. Here it is those who are servants of the beast, or those worshiping the image of the beast—

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or [a]the name of the beast, [b]or the number of his name.
18 [c]Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count [d]the number of the beast: [e]for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six.

17 right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or sell, save he that hath the mark, *even* the name of the beast or the number
18 of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is [1]Six hundred and sixty and six.

a ch. 14: 11....*b* ch. 15: 2....*c* ch. 17: 9....*d* ch. 15: 2....*e* ch. 21: 17.—1 Some ancient authorities read, *Six hundred and sixteen.*

the servants and followers of Antichrist. "It is utterly unnecessary," says Carpenter, most truly, "to take this brand of evil literally, any more than we took the seal of Christ (ch. 7:3) literally. That seal," he adds, "we understand as spiritual, in the faith and in the character; this evil brand we must interpret in like manner. It surely means acquiescence in character and action to the principles of this tyrannical world-power; the right hand is the symbol of toil and social intercourse; the forehead is the symbol of character, as time is ever writing its awful tale upon men's brows."

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark or the name [*even the name*] **of the beast, or the number of his name.** Here occurs one of those intimations which point so surely to the right identification of the persecuting power symbolized. One of the means used, both under pagan emperors and under popes, to compel conformity, was that here alluded to—the interdiction of ordinary intercourse between those who refused thus to conform, either to the pagan or the papal beliefs and rites, and their fellow-citizens—extending even to the mere intercourse of buying and selling. Alford quotes a passage from Bede, in which this is asserted of Diocletian; and also a canon of the third Lateran Council, held A. D. 1139, to the following effect: "*Ne quis eos—scil. hereticos—in domibus vel in terra sua tenere vel fovere vel negotiationem cum eis exercere presumat:* Let no one presume to hold intercourse with the heretics, either in houses or in land, or any species of negotiation." In more modern times like interdicts have been imposed in papal countries, and even in Protestant ones, where under dominant church-and-state systems the old hierarchical spirit survived. The clauses, "save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name," are symbolical expressions, pointing to the same general idea as wehave set forth in the statement that those who owned subjection to the beast received "a mark, in [on] their right hand, or in [upon] their forehead." It expresses the absolute *subjection* imposed by this evil power. The *stigmata* were symbols of *servile* subjection. Those who bore them were claimed as slaves, were held, bought, and sold as property; or, when it was a mark of military enrollment, it implied absolute control on the part of the monarch to whose service they were devoted, and his right to compel such service at his own arbitrary will. No student of history needs to be told how perfectly in this particular the popes copied the absolutism of the pagan imperium; the second beast thus "exercising all the authority of the first beast," with even a more absolute claim to ownership in both body and soul.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three score and six. It seems unnecessary to raise any question as to the reading, here, whether it shall stand "sixteen and six" (ἑκκαίδεκα ἕξ), or, "sixty and six" (ἑξήκοντα ἕξ). Some ancient authorities give the former, but the text as settled by Westcott and Hort, the latter, which may be accepted as correct. There is also a further question as to what is implied in the expressions, "Here is wisdom," and, "Let him that hath understanding." Alford views them as a species of challenge, inviting students of the passage to exercise their "wisdom" in solving the mystery of the beast's number. Others seem to think the implication to be that a solution is really impossible to the merely human "wisdom," or "understanding," and to be left as one of those mysteries which to men are inexplicable. Perhaps the word "challenge" is not quite appropriate in such a case; and still, the reading of this "number of the beast" seems to be proposed as a thing possible, though difficult; while a clue to the difficulties of it appears to be given in the clause, "for it is the number of a man."

Just what this imports, it may not be easy to determine. What is "the number of a man?" The most likely answer is that which is suggested in the phrase used more than once in other places, as in the preceding verse of this chapter, and again in verse second of chapter fifteen, "the number *of his name*"—that is, the number of the name of the beast. If, then, the number of the beast is the number of his name, "the number of a man," in the clause under consideration, appears to mean "the number of" a man's "name"; and this may most reasonably be supposed to be the number resulting from adding together the separate numbers represented by the several *letters* of the name, in accordance with the Greek system of enumeration. It is upon this basis, in fact, that the various attempts made to solve the difficulty—and they have been very many—have mostly proceeded. We cannot, of course, take space for discussing these numerous attempts. A very ancient solution, dating from the time of Irenæus, seems to us the only really probable one. According to this method of solution, the name in question is the name *Lateinos*, Latin (in its Greek form as λατεῖνος). The numerical value of the letters will amount to 666 (λ=30, α=1, τ=300, ε=5, ι=10, ν=50, ο=70, ς=200; total, 666). Alford appears to prefer this view. As explained by Irenæus, who lived before the papal manifestation of Antichrist had come, the word denoted in this place the pagan Roman Empire. After alluding to this, Alford, speaking of Papal Rome as now equally to be included, says: "The Latin Empire, the Latin Church, Latin Christianity, have ever been its commonly current appellations; its language, civil and ecclesiastical, has ever been Latin; its public services, in defiance of the most obvious requisite for public worship, have ever been throughout the world conducted in Latin; there is no one word which could so completely describe its character, and at the same time unite the ancient and modern attributes of the two beasts, as this." It may possibly seem to some readers that if the number is said to be "the number of *a man*," the implication must be the name of some individual man, or emperor—which is not true of Lateinos. This, however, does not necessarily follow. The meaning may be, and probably is, that we must find the number of the beast from the number of his name, just as we should find the number of a man from the number of *his* name. Besides, it is quite impossible that any one man, either emperor or pope, should meet the conditions of the intense and comprehensive characterization of the "beast" as here described. Upon the whole, we prefer the explanation above given, conceding, however, the liability to error in a case of this kind. Accepting it, the second beast becomes Antichrist in his manifestation as a *spiritual power*, chiefly papal Rome, as the first beast was Antichrist in his manifestation as a *world-power*, culminating in pagan Rome.

EXCURSUS B.—ANTICHRIST.

The topics needing a wider treatment, suggested by the foregoing exposition, may be most conveniently grouped under the one general topic of the chapter. The chapter itself is one of those pivotal ones, upon each of which some section of the Apocalyptic scheme appears to turn. To some extent, it sums the revelations of previous chapters, and in a like measure anticipates those which follow. The operation of evil forces, hostile to Christ and to his kingdom and cause, has been before us under the seals and the trumpets. Here the same forces come upon the scene in distinct personifications, and the "mystery" of that "iniquity" which we have seen at work is revealed in the attributes, symbolizing all that is most bloody, cruel, and destructive, with which these "wild beasts" are endowed. It becomes clear, also, that what might have seemed to be *distinct* forces, though operating to a like evil end, are really manifestations of *one* sinister power. The first beast receives from the dragon "his power, and his seat, and great authority"; while the second beast "exercises all the authority of the first"; and not only so, but he does this *in his sight*, in his presence—the duality of the representation becoming thus, in a measure, lost in the unity of spirit and design. Again, the second beast, though lamb-like in some part of his exterior, speaks "with the voice of the dragon." These three sinister appearances, therefore, really represent one and the same hostile power. As to its origin and spirit, this power is Satanic; as to one form of its manifestation, it "rises up" out of political tumult and disorder, while as to the other, it

is a birth out of organized and usurping systems, earthly in their nature, though making pretensions far higher—the three represent one mighty principle of evil, which, because in history it makes war, as the concentration and expression of all that is worst in it, upon Christ and his cause and his people, bears the appropriate name, ANTICHRIST.

There is only one place in the New Testament where this precise name occurs, viz., in John's First Epistle, 2: 18, 22: "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour. . . . Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, *even* he that denieth the Father and the Son." [*Revised Version.*] This passage is very important as suggesting the correct view of the antichristian principle, whatever the form or the period of its manifestation. John does not mean to say that every one denying that Jesus is the Christ is himself Antichrist, but that in this denial is the essence of all that is antichristian, whensoever and howsoever it shall appear. When this apostle comes to represent this same fullness "of all subtlety and all mischief" under Apocalyptic imagery, he gives us, as we have seen, that wider view which takes in all history, and which exhibits this power to us as represented in all forms of oppressive and impious despotism, and, as in every age and under all its various shapes, one and the same "enemy of all righteousness."

The peculiar antichristian development, that which was in an especial sense Anti*christ*, this apostle, in the passage just quoted from his epistle, exhibits to us as having had its beginning in the very church of Christ itself. He speaks, in the connection of the passage, of those who "went out from us," because they "were not of us; for, if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they are not of us." They had not "the anointing of the Holy Ghost," of which he speaks in the same connection. They were the worldly element in the church—a fact which may, in some measure, explain what is said, that the second beast "rises up out of the earth," an element which more and more manifested itself, gathering strength, age by age, until at last it had become the wholly dominant one. This was, in its fully developed state, as a cruel and oppressive hierarchy, the "wild beast *out of the earth*"; having its origin in that earthly, selfish, sensual, usurping, and violent spirit, which, contrasted with what is heavenly and truly Christian, is, indeed, earthly and *anti*christian. This is Antichrist, in his express and peculiar manifestation. This is "The Man of Sin."

It is clear, then, if our exposition of the chapter be correct, that we are not to find the whole meaning and scope of this name which has played so great a part in modern religious controversy in the Papacy alone. Indeed, the passage quoted from John's First Epistle, itself, makes this evident. Like utterances are found in the writings of Paul: as in 2 Thess. 2: 7: "For the mystery of lawlessness [*Revised Version*] *doth already work;* only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." The allusion here must be, as in the case of the passage from John, to those incipient tendencies, beginning already to appear, which threatened a development so inauspicious, and "whose" final "coming" was, indeed, as the imagery in our chapter so evidently sets forth, "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs of lying wonders; and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish." Antichrist is, therefore, rather a *principle*, a *force*—we might say a *tendency*, if that word were strong enough—than a power, or an organism, and is to be recognized elsewhere, as well as in that great antichristian apostasy to which so many have been inclined to limit the term.

Carpenter, the author of the exposition of the Apocalypse in Ellicott's Commentary, has some thoughts upon the subject here noticed, which are so apposite and weighty that we must transcribe what he says. After presenting a view in substance the same as that which we offer above, he proceeds: "Is there, then, no personal Antichrist? It has been ably argued that the Man of Sin must be an individual. There are certain expressions which seem to point to a single person—notably the remarkable use of the masculine gender when the wild beast is referred to (Rev. 13:5); but it seems more consonant with the symbolism of the Apocalypse to regard

the wild beast as the figurative embodiment of the false, seductive, antichristian spirit which belongs to more ages than one, which reveals itself in divers aspects, and yet always manifests the same hostility to the Divine Spirit. It must not be supposed, however, that this view denies a personal Antichrist. On the contrary, it is in perfect harmony with this view to note that the wild-beast spirit has often culminated in an individual; the typical forecasts of Antichrist have often been individuals. Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod, Nero, might fairly be regarded as the incarnation of the ungodly spirit. Similarly, in later ages, it is not to be wondered at that holy, Christ-taught men, groaning for the sorrows of the world and the corruptions of Christianity, saw in many who occupied the papal chair, the very representatives of the false prophet—The Antichrist. . . It follows that the view here maintained does not exclude the possibility of a future Antichrist, in whom the typical features shall yet find a clearer and fuller manifestation than in any former age. We think it, however, more important to note the principles which may constitute the Antichrist in every age: these being summarily seen in the words of John: 'He is antichrist that denieth both the Father and the Son.' We deem it possible to imagine the rankest materialism allying itself with a gorgeous ritual—to see the high-priests of science acquiescing in the most elaborate of ecclesiasticisms, and the agnostic in creed becoming a ceremonialist in worship, till the satire shall be only too sadly true, 'I found plenty of worshipers, but no God.'" The thought suggested, here, is weighty and momentous. The true Christianity is confronted, in this age, by two formidable enemies: the one a false and usurping ecclesiasticism, the other an infidelity more bold, more sweeping in its denials, more daring in its blasphemies, and at the same time more seductive, than any which the world has before seen. It might seem as if no two forces were less likely to enter into alliance with each other than a hierarchical system which builds on the superstition of its devotees, and an atheistical system which denounces all religion as superstition, which is intolerant toward all religious ceremonial, which treats the church and its ministry with contempt; and which, with more reason, views every priestly system as usurpation and tyranny. And still, mortal foes have more than once been found in combination, and these two may yet combine. Should this ever occur, Antichrist will have a new revelation.

We may call attention, here, to the fact, that the second beast, in the later pages of this book, seems to assume the name of "the false prophet"—or rather, this designation is given to him, in place of that which he originally bears. The name occurs, first, in ch. 16: 13, where we read: "And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." Where the word "beast" alone occurs, the beast out of the sea appears to be meant; the second beast, or beast out of the earth, at the point just noted (ch. 16: 13), drops his original designation altogether, and henceforward is known as "the false prophet." These "unclean spirits as frogs" are "spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." These thus described are, therefore, among the later manifestations of Antichrist, and the language used seems to imply that antichristian ecclesiasticism—the second beast—undergoes a certain change. It appears, under this later form, less as an oppressive, domineering system, and more as a misleading and deceitful one, a "false prophet," uniting with all its other features that of the pre-eminent deceiver. This would seem to come through some such combination as that mentioned above; or at least, in a practical, if not a formal and intentional, co-operation of corrupt and corrupting ecclesiasticism with infidelity, atheism, delusion, and all those agencies by which human beings are so often ruinously blinded and misled. The "beast" element and the "false prophet" element may enter into no actual alliance; and still may be manifestations of one and the same bitterly antichristian principle, each being more or less prominent in operation and effect, as opportunity may offer or allow. As the last times draw on, we may suppose that such a system of ecclesiastical tyranny as once held the world in chains may grow less and less possible, while the function of the "false prophet" gains scope in the same

CHAPTER XIV.

AND I looked, and, lo, [a] a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him [b] a hundred forty *and* four thousand, [c] having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, [d] as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of [e] harpers harping with their harps:

3 And [f] they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song [g] but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

1 AND I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his
2 Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard *was* as *the voice* of harpers harping with their
3 harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, *even* they

a ch. 5: 6....b ch. 7: 4....c ch. 7: 3; 13: 16....d ch. 1: 15; 19: 6....e ch. 5: 8....f ch. 5: 9; 15: 3....g ver. 1.

proportion. This latter designation, in such a case, becomes the more fitting one.

In view of all we may well say that, so long as Christians see still upon the field "enemies of all righteousness" so formidable as these, whether singly or in combination, they may well presume that the days of Antichrist are not yet numbered, nor the wars of the militant church yet at an end.

REDEMPTION VICTORIOUS.

1-5. THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION.

1. And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion. Antichrist has now been revealed. What will be the issue of the collision between the forces of destruction so personified, and the forces of redemption, summed and expressed in Christ and his redeeming work? Will he that destroys triumph, or he that saves? This chapter is to tell us. We should read "*the* Lamb." It is the Lamb before seen "in the midst of the throne." He is now beheld standing on Mount Zion. The holy hill, on which stood the fortress and the palace of the king, must here be understood as used in symbol, as Babylon also is below; the two being in contrast, both as to their nature and as to their destiny—Zion, the eternal, safe citadel, standing forever, Babylon doomed to fall, finally, irrecoverably. The hill on which David reigned thus appears as the type of that on which "David's greater Son" shall reign eternally—that is, the redeemed church. In the changes of the vision, all those features of it which are fixed and permanent remaining as before—the throne, the living creatures and the elders—a new scene is presented. It is assumed that Antichrist is busy on earth in his work of destruction; and now stands revealed the power by which he is opposed—the Lamb on Mount Zion.—**And with him a hundred forty and four thousand.** This number has been given before (CH. 7: 4)—the sealed ones "of all the tribes of the children of Israel." The number is both symbolical and representative. It symbolizes fullness, completeness, a round and perfect number; it represents the whole company of the saved. Those who appear with the Lamb on Mount Zion are thus representative figures, just as the four-and-twenty elders and the four living creatures are.—**Having his** [the Lamb's] **Father's name written in their foreheads.** Those who serve the beast have his name in their foreheads. They who follow the Lamb have his Father's name so written. In this is symbolized the difference in character and condition which underlies all differences in destiny.

2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. What the voice is, the clause following explains. The comparisons used, "many waters," and "great thunder," suggest the mingling of myriad voices, and at the same time their unison in one vast diapason It is as when the mighty sea waves are dashing upon the shore; the impression, as one listens, is partly that of a single sublime rush of sound; partly it suggests the "many waters" which come flowing in, billow upon billow.—**And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.** See, for a more correct rendering, the Revised Version, above. By "heaven" in the preceding clause, is still meant the whole Apocalyptic scene; only, it is probable that these heavenly harpers are invisible. The sweet, mighty peal of melody comes as if from a distance, and reminds the seer of infinite heavenly spaces far beyond the range of vision, and of infinite multitudes there "harping with their harps."

3. And they sung as it were a new

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; [c]for they are virgins. These are they [b]which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These [c]were redeemed from among men, [d]*being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

4 that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These *are* they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, *to be* the first fruits unto God and unto

a 2 Cor. 11: 2....*b* ch. 3: 4; 7: 15, 17; 17: 14....*c* ch. 5: 9....*d* 1 James 1: 18.

song before the throne, and before the four beasts [*living creatures*], **and the elders.** Whether visible on the scene, or not, the harpers belong to it; their song is one of adoration of him that sits upon the throne, and in sympathy with the encompassing elders and living creatures. Their song is "*as it were* new"—the ever new song of redemption, celebrating that display of grace in God's redeeming work, which can never cease to be a wonder and a praise.—**And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.** Some expositors (as Lange, Lord, Bengel, Hengstenberg), seem to understand that the hundred and forty-four thousand are themselves the harpers. This appears to be a mistake. The hundred forty and four thousand "learn" the song; implying that others are singing it and from these they learn it—or, at least, they "learn" it so that the chorus of heavenly praise and the chorus of the redeemed blend in harmony. Lange says: "The voices are in part voices of Christian nations (the voice of *great waters*), in part the voice of the great prophets (the voice of a *great thunder*"). This interpretation of the symbolism is too conjectural, and cannot be depended upon. What the picture given naturally suggests is, first, a chorus of heavenly music, harps and voices uniting, in which the wonders of redemption are extolled; those "angels," amongst whom, as our Lord has told us, there is such "joy over one sinner that repenteth," uniting in hymns of ecstatic praise to him by whom redemption is wrought. This song the redeemed themselves "learn." And only they *can* learn it. Alford says, most truly: "The sweetest and most skillful harmonies convey no pleasure to, nor are they appreciated by, an uneducated ear; whereas the experienced musician finds in every chord the most exquisite enjoyment. . . . Even so this heavenly song speaks only to the virgin heart, and can be learnt only by those who accompany the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The expression, "redeemed [*purchased*] out of the earth," reminds us of the parallel passage, ch. 5: 9: "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God [*hast bought us for God*] by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." There is another Greek word (λυτρόω) for the specific idea to "redeem," or "ransom"; the word here used (ἀγοράζω), denoting to purchase, as above, in ch. 13: 17. If we compare the words in our present text with ch. 5: 9, we shall the better see the true scope of the number given for those who learn the new song—the hundred forty and four thousand. *Here* it is a specific number; *there* the implication is of a multitude altogether countless. We must infer that here as there, the "purchased out of the earth" are really innumerable; and that therefore the number itself is symbolical and representative. Twelve is the number for spiritual completeness, applied to the servants and people of God, as seven is of completeness, perfection, in the wider sense. Alford explains this, in his "*Prolegomena*": "Twelve is the number especially appropriated to the church, and to those appearances which are symbolically connected with her. Twice twelve is the number of the heavenly elders; twelve times twelve thousand the number of the sealed elect." Other examples of the use of this number he gives as follows: "The woman in ch. 12:1, has a crown of twelve stars; the heavenly city has twelve gates; at the gates twelve angels, and on them the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; also twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles; and its circumference (probably) twelve thousand stadia. Finally, in the midst of her [the city] the tree of life brings forth twelve manner of fruits." The germ of this symbolism seems to be in the original twelve tribes, and again in the twelve apostles chosen by our Lord. The number found here, therefore, "an hundred forty and four thousand," represents, not an exact enumeration, but the whole vast company of the redeemed—"a number which no man can number," and for this reason, probably, represented thus in symbol.

4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.

5 And [a]in their mouth was found no guile: for [b]they are without fault before the throne of God.
6 And I saw another angel [c]fly in the midst of heaven, [d]having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, [e]and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

5 the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.
6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that [1]dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and

a Ps. 32:2; Zeph. 3:13....b Ephes. 5:27; Jude 24....c ch. 8:13....d Ephes. 3:9, 10, 11; Titus 1:2....e ch. 13:7.—1 Gr. *sit.*

The persistent tendency in some writers to forsake the symbolism which pervades this book, is seen in the various interpretations given to the words just written. Romanist expositors will have it that these so named are the ascetics, especially monks. Augustine, Bede, Düsterdieck, think the reference is, in general, to celibacy; Hengstenberg, to chastity, whether in the married or single life; De Wette's view is, in general, like that of Hengstenberg. Alford's is similar. Lange's reference to the Old Testament symbolism, in this connection, where idolatry is so often represented under the idea of unchastity, is much more to the purpose. With this may be associated that of the New Testament, in which the church appears as the virgin Bride of the Lord. Carpenter's view, in Ellicott, therefore, that what is represented under the symbolism of this passage is *purity*, as one characteristic of the redeemed, seems a just one; this purity, we may add, as in contrast with what is seen in them that "worship the beast." It is the ancient figure of a pure and true worship of God, with all which that imports, as contrasted with the impure idolatries of those who bear in their foreheads the mark of the beast, implying every manner of antichristian "iniquity." **These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.** Here, as Carpenter says, is a second characteristic; which is, *implicit obedience.* "They are those who are with Christ, who have tasted the cup that their Lord tasted, and have taken up the cross and followed him."—**These were redeemed** [purchased] **from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.** This denotes "*separation* or unworldliness; they were purchased from among men, as a first fruit to God, and to the Lamb." They are "not their own, for they are bought with a price." Their recognition of this, in all life's relations, in all service and suffering, in all outward conduct and inward experience, is one of the things that characterize the redeemed.

5. And in their mouth was found no guile [*no lie*]. A literal rendering of the Greek would be: "And in their mouth there was not found a falsehood." They are *truthful*—not hypocrites, not deceivers—they *are* what they *seem* to be.—**For they are without fault before the throne of God.** The corrected text omits the words: "before the throne of God." The word translated "for" (γάρ), is also omitted by Westcott and Hort, though retained by Tischendorf. The clauses as so amended would read simply: "They are without fault," blameless. This cannot mean sinless perfection, at least in the militant earthly state of the redeemed. It implies two things—that the character required of such as they is found in them, and that in the redemption of which they are made the subjects, they are placed in a condition of absolute acceptance. They are "accepted in the Beloved."

6-12. ANGELIC PROCLAMATIONS.

6. And I saw another angel fly [flying] **in the midst of heaven.** The word "another," here, seems intended simply to distinguish this angel from all that have before appeared. In the mention, also, of the second and third of these messenger angels, below, the form of expression appears meant to be emphatic of this distinction. Literally it is, "*Another angel, the second*"; "*Another angel, the third.*" The first angel flies in mid-heaven. From the mid-heaven, his field of view may be conceived as embracing the whole inhabited world. His voice, also, sounding from the height of heaven, a "loud voice" (ver. 7), reaches to every part of the world, and is conceived as heard by all human creatures. This proclamation, therefore, is *world-wide;* a fact very important to a right apprehension of what is here intended.—**Having the everlasting gospel to preach.** The translation of Carpenter, in Ellicott, is: "having an everlasting gospel, to declare glad tidings." In the Greek, the words "gospel" and "preach"—as rendered in the common version—have a closer relation to

7 Saying with a loud voice, [a] Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: [b] and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

7 tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

a ch. 11:18; 15:4....b Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33.6; 124:8; 146:5, 6; Acts 14:15; 17:24.

each other than is implied in the "glad tidings," and "proclaim" of the revision. Carpenter's rendering is the more literally exact one. The noun "gospel" and the verb "preach" ("*declare glad tidings*"), having in the Greek the same radical part, emphasize the same leading idea, namely, that this which the angel proclaims is "glad tidings." The leading thought in the verse, so far, is the preciousness of this gospel. The epithet "everlasting," "eternal," intimates alike the eternal, divine purpose upon which the warrant of this announcement rests, and that unchangeableness of God, which makes it sure that of all which he has spoken no one word of promise shall fail.—**Unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.** The preposition (ἐπί) translated in this place, as also by the revisers "unto," is rendered by Carpenter "over." It is here followed by the accusative case, and signifies properly "extending over," implying the *extent* of the proclamation. The verse, as a whole, confirms the view taken of the significance of the angel's flight in mid-heaven. It is a world-wide proclamation. The two leading thoughts, therefore, in the verse are, (1) the preciousness of the glad tidings announced in this proclamation of the angel; and (2) the absolute *universality* of the announcement, so far as this world is concerned. The angel himself must be viewed as a representative figure, setting forth the idea of that instrumentality in general, by means of which the gospel is thus preached to the ends of the earth. The actual messengers are not angels, least of all any single angel, but men. This angel "flying in mid-heaven, having an everlasting gospel to declare glad tidings" in all the earth, represents the church and its ministers, to whom this charge has really been committed, and by whom the gospel *is* preached, "to every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue." The appearance of the angel, besides, in the vision, seems clearly significant of some period of Christian history when this world-wide preaching of the gospel should be *a fact*, and not merely a conception or a hope. This period can well be no other than that in which, following upon a recovery of Christian truth in its simplicity, and its preciousness, after many centuries of obscuring false-teaching, the church in its various instrumentalities steadily advances to the realization of that divine idea contained in the Lord's own words: "The field is the world."

7. Saying, with a loud voice. The loud voice aids the conception of a proclamation sounding round the world.—**Fear God, and give glory to him.** Such is the tenor of this proclamation. How is it "glad tidings?" A question which renews itself as we note the words which follow.—**For the hour of his judgment is come.** The two clauses seem to be a summary of the gospel message consistent with its *ultimate* meaning and purpose. The gospel is not alone the announcement of a method of human salvation. Redemption is not salvation only. There are great and far-reaching aims in both which concern the *basis* upon which universal well-being rests, and which, rightly understood, are above all the occasion of "gladness" for those to whom the "tidings" shall come. These aims also are implied in the tenor of the gospel message itself. "Fear God and give glory to him"—this, indeed, is the gospel. For not only is the fear of God the beginning of that wisdom which makes wise unto salvation, but the gospel proffer and promise themselves rest upon an appeal first made to men as sinners, and calling them to "fear God." The "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To "give glory" to God is to see him, view him, trust him, yield to him, as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; honoring him in that utter submission to him which true penitence implies, and in that faith which sees him as the gracious and the faithful One. Thus does the proclamation of the angel of the gospel set forth alike what is most fundamental and what is most comprehensive in the gospel message itself. The further announcement

8 And there followed another angel, saying, [a]Babylon is fallen, is fallen, [b]that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, [c]If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his

a Isa. 21 : 9; Jer. 51 : 8; ch. 18 : 2....b Jer. 51 : 7; ch. 11 : 8; 16 : 19; 17 : 2, 5; 18 : 3, 10, 18, 21; 19 : 2....c ch. 13 : 14, 15.

that the "hour of his judgment is come," indicates that the time has arrived in which those assertions of divine sovereignty, and those divine vindications of such as have suffered and served, and shall continue to do so, for which the church of the redeemed was so long as if waiting and watching, shall be realized. The hour of God's judgment, that manifestation of himself as the righteous Judge and Sovereign, though a terror to the wicked, brings "gladness" to "the upright in heart." We are to notice, also, that this judgment is coincident, in point of time, with the renewed and world-wide preaching of the gospel. What this imports comes to view more clearly as we study what is found below, in chapter sixteen, in connection with the pouring out of the seven vials,—**And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.** That men may thus worship God, the Author and Framer of all things, and that so his righteous sovereignty on earth may be fully established—with this in view, as the ultimate end, is the gospel preached.

8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city. "Another, a second angel," is the more full translation. The order of the subsequent words, as in the revision, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great," makes the sense more vivid and emphatic. Both the Sinaitic and the Alexandrine manuscripts omit the word "city." This reading Westcott and Hort, and the revisers, follow. Here, occurs, for the first time in this book, the symbolic name "Babylon," of which so much is made in subsequent chapters. The full significance of this name we must reserve for treatment in the General Comments, below. Alford's view that Rome pagan and papal, principally papal, is intended, may be quoted here, as what seems correct. The tenor of this proclamation of the second angel then is, that the violent hostile power, against which the truth and the people of God have so long had to contend, has now at last come to the hour of its overthrow.—**Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.** The word "because" should be omitted. "*Who hath made,*" etc., is according to the amended Greek text. Fornication is the Old Testament expression —so much followed by John in this book—for idolatry: while under the imagery of this last word is here implied all those antichristian excesses into which the worshipers of the beast, the citizens of "Babylon," were drawn. The intoxicating character of this pernicious influence, and the fanaticism which made so large an element in all antichristian opposition and violence, are implied in the symbol of "wine" here used. It is deadly wine: "the wine," says the note of Carpenter in Ellicott, "alike of her sin and of her doom, of her fornication and the wrath that shall overtake it."

9. And the third angel [another angel, a third] **followed them, saying with a loud** [*great*] **voice, If any man worship the beast and his image.** The second angel has proclaimed the fall of Babylon. The connection of the whole passage indicates that a certain identity is to be recognized between Babylon, as the symbol of God-opposing power, and the wild beast described in a previous chapter, and now again mentioned as representative of that same power, in its chief and comprehensive manifestation. Of this, more in the General Comments below.—**And receive his mark in** [*a mark on*] **his forehead, or in** [*upon*] **his hand.** The indication of character, here, should not be restricted to actual and positive confederacy with the beast, in avowed and open hostility to God and his cause. Men may join themselves to the enemies of God without any formal or declared intention of so doing. The words of Jesus, "He that is not with us is against us"; "he that gathereth not with me scattereth," suggest the principle by which all character and conduct must be

10 The same [a]shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is [b]poured out without mixture into [c]the cup of his indignation; and [d]he shall be tormented with [e]fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

10 forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is [1]prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the

a Ps. 75 : 8; Isa. 51 : 17; Jer. 25 : 15....b ch. 18 : 6....c ch. 16 : 19....e ch. 20 : 10..../ ch. 19 : 20.—1 Gr. *mingled.*

determined. Sin itself, especially sin that is persistent, unrepented of, with the hardening processes inseparable from it, and the invariable tendency of bad to become worse —sin, itself, is "the mark of the beast." Whether more or less aggravated and defiant, it allies us with the enemies of God, and, unexpiated and unforgiven, must make us partakers of their doom.

10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God. "*He also* [καὶ αὐτὸς] *shall drink*," is better. The expression "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of G.," takes us back to the similar one in ver. 8: "Who [Babylon] hath made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"—they shared in her crime, they shall now share in her doom. This point of resemblance makes it the more evident that Babylon, as the enticer, and the first wild beast fixing his mark upon those who, of purpose or otherwise, are confederate with him and serve under him, as also the second beast which compelled all that dwell upon the earth "to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed"—are in a general way to be identified.—**Which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.** Some expositors appear to find apparent opposition of ideas in this passage. If the marginal reading in the revised version itself were adopted, the words would stand: "which is mingled unmixed." Carpenter, in Ellicott, translates, "which is mingled pure," taking the word "pure," however, in the sense of undiluted. Alford's rendering is nearly the same, though he explains the word "pure" by the word "unmixed." The Greek word (κεράννυμι), from which the participial form (κεκερασμένου), here employed, comes, is often used in the sense of "pour," while the word (ἀκράτου), translated in the common version "without mixture," though having the original sense of pure, undiluted, has also the acquired meaning of "*strong.*" A literal translation of the passage, therefore, presenting its meaning in its simplest form, would be: "which is poured out strong," *i. e.*, without dilution. It seems unlikely that the just wrath of God should be here compared to any kind of mixed drinks, in which the intoxicating quality was made more intense by the infusion of noxious elements. The meaning clearly is, that the wine of the wrath of God is poured out without dilution, into the cup of his indignation; and of this strong wine of his wrath the worshiper and servant of the beast must drink.—**And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.** Some difficulty of interpretation is found in the words "in presence of," etc. Is it to the torments of hell that reference is made? and do those who are condemned to such torments suffer thus "in the presence of," in the sight of, "the holy angels" and the Redeemer himself? Alford thinks that the words must be literally taken, and as indicating "that the torments are visible to the angels and the Lamb." He refers, as a parallel passage, to the parable of the rich man, in torment, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16 : 23). Lange's comment is: "Can this [what appears in our present passage, not with allusion to the parable] be said of the torments of hell in the strict sense of the term? The torments of hell resultant upon being cast into *the lake of fire*, are spoken of later. Do they not begin, however, in this present life, especially at the end of time, where time and eternity come in contact with each other?" Carpenter seems to take the words as describing effects of sin in the present life. He says: "Sin, which is first embraced as a delight, becomes soon an inexorable tyrant, by an awful retribution compelling men along the routine of evil habits which they loathe, while they long for, and long for even while they loathe them; there is a destiny of unrest in all sin. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest.' It is well that solemn words like these should be read by the light of the most certain of all truths—the power sin has of stamping its indelible features upon the human character, and giving to habit the

11 And [a]the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
12 [b]Here is the patience of the saints: [c]here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

11 Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up [1]for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image,
12 and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the [2]patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

a Isa. 34 : 10; ch. 19 : 3....*b* ch. 13 : 10....*c* ch. 12 : 17.——1 Gr. *unto ages of ages*....2 Or, *steadfastness*.

force of destiny." De Wette translates ἐνώπιον, "*nach dem Urtheile*," "according to the judgment of"—the holy angels and the Lamb. Both Düsterdieck and Alford reject this as inadmissible. Perhaps light upon the true interpretation, here, may be gained from what we find in 2 Thess. 1 : 6–9: "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (*Revised Version*). If the visitation upon worshipers of the beast pointed at in the passage under consideration be understood as made by "the Lord from heaven with the angels of his power," the significance of the words, "in the presence of," is sufficiently plain. Nor is it necessary to take the expression, "tormented with fire and brimstone," as having sole reference, perhaps not express reference, to the punishment of hell. Both here and in the words which follow, there seems to be allusion to the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, when "the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon" them. The figure of the combination of all the forces of ungodliness as "Babylon," makes the allusion still more significant; while the characterization of the ungodly themselves as those having "the mark of the beast" is in like manner consistent with the conception of such wickedness as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, visited with just judgment. The words in question, therefore, "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb," may be understood as indicating in general the righteous judgment of God, through those whom he makes the instruments of such judgment, and as comprehensive of the judgment in its whole extent, and its whole period, in time and in eternity. This punishment, each one found with the mark of the beast upon him, must share.

11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. "*Goeth up unto the ages of ages.*" In the account given (Gen. 19 : 28) of the destruction of the cities of the plain, we read: "And lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Upon this, the symbolism of our present passage is clearly founded. That judgment of God in the old time is used to represent and illustrate the visitation that shall come upon mystical Babylon and all worshipers of the beast. Doubtless, the idea of hell-torments is included; for "the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever." Yet the judgment begins even in this life; national judgment sent upon the people as a whole, and those rulers, who have made themselves servants and instruments of the beast; judgment upon systems of false doctrine, of idolatrous worship, persecuting hierarchies—all the various forms which organized ungodliness has assumed in this world; and punishment, too, upon individual sinners, each according to the measure of his demerit; punishment felt in the very nature of sin, much more in those consequences of sin which endure forever.—**And they have no rest, day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.** This is in the main a recapitulation.

12. Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. The changes which appear in the corrected translation should be noticed. The marginal reading, "steadfastness," in the revised version, may also be noticed with advantage. The verse contrasts the saints, their character, and their destiny, with those whose character and prospects have, in previous verses, been so vividly set forth. *These* "keep the commandments of God"; they keep the "faith of Jesus." Their steadfastness, "patience," is seen in their fidelity, and in their waiting for Christ. The apostasy and ungodliness of the world around them only bring into more

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, [a]Blessed *are* the dead [b]which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, [c]that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die [1]in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: for their works follow with them.

[a] Eccles. 4:1, 2; ch. 20:6....[b] 1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thess. 4:16....[c] 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 4:9, 10; ch. 6:11.——1 Or, *in the Lord. From henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit.*

vivid contrast their piety and their constancy, while the awfulness of the doom visited on the enemies of God, makes all the more resplendent the glory and felicity of his redeemed.

13. THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN. **And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me.** The voices in the several visions just described have been connected with angel forms, coming forth upon the Apocalyptic scene. A voice is now heard, the source of which is invisible. This is represented in the words "from heaven."—**Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth.** The connection of this announcement with what immediately precedes is quite clear. We have just read of "the patience of the saints; them that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Of all such as these, as they "die in the Lord," John is commanded to write that they are "blessed." The command to write this emphasizes it, as an announcement to which particular attention should be given. The "saints" who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," are called to the exercise of "patience," of steadfastness. They have much to endure. Let it be written, how sure shall be their recompense for all. Whatever the nature of their ordeal, whether more or less severe, in whatever age of the long period during which the gospel shall have this world-wide proclamation and Babylon shall be visited with doom, whether in stormy days of persecution, or those in which only the more insidious assaults of evil shall call for resistance—through all, this word shall hold true, that they who die in the Lord are blessed. This, too, may aid in the exposition of the words, "from henceforth." They do not mean, of course, that such as in ages previous died in the Lord are not blessed; but they have reference to that future now immediately held in view—that of which we are yet to read, where vials of judgment will be poured out, and great Babylon will come to its final fall. In the midst of all this, during all that troubled future, "from henceforth," they who endure, faithful unto death, may be certain of this, that dying in the Lord they are blessed. It may be well to note that the expression "from henceforth" (a translation of ἀπ' ἄρτι), implies something of a pleonasm. "Henceforth" means all that "from henceforth" can mean. Besides, the Greek word (ἄρτι) does not of itself mean "henceforth." It is the emphatic word for "now," "the present moment." A literal translation would therefore be, "from this time," "from this present moment."—**Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.** The burden-bearing, the various forms of personal trial, all the suffering and all the weariness of their earthly lot, are implied in the contrast of the word "rest." This word means *heaven*, in all that makes it the perfect opposite, the glorious and blessed antithesis of *earth*.—**And their works do follow them.** The *results* of what they *do* and *suffer* in God's cause and for the name of Jesus, shall last on into that future of blessedness, and there be found in all their richness. These shall be the "friends," who shall "receive them into everlasting habitations."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We have special occasion, in the study of the present chapter, to notice that contrast of forces, tendencies, and final issues which so pervades the visions of this book. It is wonderful how invariably in every part of the book the figure of the Redeemer confronts that of the Destroyer; how, in every case, the Enemy is overthrown by the Defender. "Victory turns," always, "on Zion's side." It would be hard to imagine anything more formidable than the hostile forces pictured forth in chapter thirteen—in the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth. In these three the whole hostile power of the universe is seen in combination against God and his people. The dragon represents the forces of hell; the beast out of the sea, world-power in its most fierce and deadly form and spirit; and the beast out of the earth, corrupt

ecclesiasticism, persecuting hierarchies, all that is most fell and most destructive in spiritual wickedness in high places. Against these stands arrayed, so far as human eyes can see, simply the church of the Lord Jesus; and this, at certain periods, so reduced in number as to be scarcely found at all. At one time, so has the enemy prevailed, that the only apparent indication that there remains in the universe even any protest against his disastrous supremacy is the cry of the souls under the altar. At another time, the dragon chases the woman with the man-child into the wilderness and casts out after her a destroying flood, following her and her seed with bitter persecution till only a "remnant" is left. At another, the Lord's "two witnesses"—his sole representatives in a godless and unbelieving world—lie slain and unburied in the streets of the great city, while their enemies rejoice over them, sending gifts to one another, and triumphing in the apparent silencing of the last whisper of testimony for God, and protest against their own iniquitous rule. In each of these instances, and in all similar, the contrasted picture is at once seen. The slain witnesses soon rise from the dead and ascend into heaven in sight of their dismayed enemies, while a glorious form, robed in the symbols of salvation, descends from heaven with "the little book" of a recovered and restored gospel in his hand. The woman in the wilderness has a place prepared her of God, and "her son, a man-child," "caught up to God and to his throne," is seen appointed to "rule all the nations with a rod of iron." The cry of the souls under the altar is answered in the proclamation, coming in the fullness of the divine plan, that there shall be delay no longer, but that the mystery of God shall hasten to its consummation, fulfilling the promise and prophecy on which the faith of the Lord's suffering remnant has been sustained in all ages of the ordeal. So in our present chapter, in its relation to the one preceding; while upon the one hand the dragon and the beasts are seen in their work of ravage, upon the other appears the Lamb on Mount Zion, and with him the glorified company of those who have "gotten the victory." Finally, in the verses just considered, upon the one side is heard the proclamation of dire overthrow and perdition for those who bear the mark of the beast, and upon the other, from open doors of heaven come words of glorious promise and assurance for them that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. "God has not forgotten the world," nor in any age of time, however dark or tempestuous, is victory for his own cause or final felicity for his people one moment in doubt.

In this chapter, for the first time, we encounter that symbolical figure of which so much is made in the visions of subsequent ones—"Babylon the Great." It may be noted that she comes thus for the first time on the scene at the moment of her downfall. The first mention of her name is in the proclamation, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!" It has, we trust, sufficiently appeared in our exposition that the power thus indicated is the same which has before been revealed as the Beast, or, perhaps, more properly, it comprises under one symbol, what is represented both by the first beast and by the second. The vivid imagery of the seventeenth chapter, where the same symbolical figure occupies the whole field of view, and again the eighteenth chapter, where what before had been seen as a woman re-appears as a city—all this shows how by various modes of representation that evil force which in all ages opposes itself to the kingdom of God is made to reveal itself, alike in its nature, its purpose, and its doom. We readily see, besides, why it is that the symbols used change as they do, as if some versatile actor were filling many parts in the same drama. The object is in these ways to set forth more fully in detail that which has already been given succinctly in the treatment of the original symbols. The world's sin, all the variety of its many-sided exhibition; the world-sovereignty, defying and resisting the sovereignty of God; the apostate church, enticing, false, and cruel; the doom of each, in so far as it is the enemy of God—these come before us in Babylon, "that great city," and its final overthrow, with wonderful vividness.

Babylon, from the time when the tower was built whose height, it was imagined, might defy any renewal of divine judgment, such as the flood which had depopulated the earth, all through those ages in which its power grew and its supremacy was confirmed, represented in a peculiar way the principle of hostility to God and to his people. No other city and no other name, in the Old Testament

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat [a] like unto the Son of man, [b] having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

14 And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud *I saw* one sitting like unto [1] a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand

a Ezek. 1 : 26; Dan. 7 : 13; ch. 1 : 13....b ch. 6 : 2.—Or, *the Son*.

period, was so significant of this as Babylon. The pride of dominion, devotion to sensual delights, the spirit of oppression and cruelty, culminated in this great city by the Euphrates. To God's people the name was long a name of dread. When the prophet announced the coming of one who should burst in her mighty gates and humble her to the ground, it was a pæan of victory for the Lord's cause. And the overthrow of the city, the suddenness of it, the completeness of it, the utter desolation which was ultimately to come upon the spot where Babylon had stood, these give it a place alike in history and in prophecy unique and peculiar. That city which had once been so filled with song, and revel, and the voice of feasting, and the shouts of armies returning from victorious wars; in which once had stood the most amazing achievements of human art; whose stability seemed to promise endurance while the world should last, adorned with splendor and shining with all that could most delight the senses and foster the vanity of the builder—was at last, during long centuries, to be a silence and a desolation. Such things have made Babylon in its fall a fitting type of that final ruin which must visit, at last, all the enemies of God. As such we find it in the visions of this book.

14-20. The Harvest and the Vintage.

14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud. We may be reminded, here, of the "bright cloud" which overshadowed the group on the mountain of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17 : 5), also of the cloud which "received" Jesus out of the sight of his disciples at the Ascension (Acts 1 : 9); and, as well, of those passages where it is said of our Lord that he shall come, at his second appearing, "in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 24 : 30; Mark 13 : 26; Rev. 1 : 7).—**And upon the cloud one sat** [*one sitting*] **like unto the Son of man.** The rendering of the revised version, "like unto *a* Son of man," with "*the* Son of man" in the margin, raises again the question which we had before us in ch. 1 : 13. We may refer to what is said there, for evidence that the omission of the article in the Greek is no conclusive indication that it should be omitted in the translation. A like omission, as there pointed out, in places where the Holy Spirit is mentioned, shows that it is quite consistent with New Testament usage, in cases of this kind. Any word which has the force of a proper name, may stand without the article in Greek, where in English the article is found. But even if the rendering of the revised version were imperative, as it clearly is not, the conclusion would still be, as it is with the article supplied, that the being here indicated is Christ. The other forms appearing in the connection of the vision are angelic. Here is one "like unto a son of man"; one not angelic, but human. Who else could he be but the incarnate Lord? There is, however, as we have seen, a warrant for retaining the words of the common version, "like unto *the* Son of man"; in which case the Lord Jesus is unmistakably pointed out.—**Having on his head a golden crown.** This sign of kingship makes it the more certain that this can be none other than the Lord himself. The crown, besides, indicates that some advanced stage of the Dispensation has now been reached, where victories have been achieved, while power and kingship and dominion are no longer delayed, but held in full possession and exercise.—**And in his hand a sharp sickle.** In our Lord's first appearance in the course of these visions, he holds "in his right hand seven stars (1 : 16); in his second (5 : 6, 7), he takes the sealed book out of the hands of the angel, and breaks its seals; in the third (10 : 1, 2), he appears under the representative form of a strong angel, clothed with a cloud, crowned with the bow of the covenant, and holding in his hand "the little book"; in the fourth he is "the Lamb on Mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." In our present passage, he is crowned as a king, but holds in his hand the sickle of the reaper. The symbolism in each of the former cases, as, we trust, our exposition has shown, is significant. Equally so is it here. The Lord appears, now, as a King, coming forward in emphatic assertion of his sovereignty, and as such bringing the great aims of his kingdom

15 And another angel [a] came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, [b] Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest [c] of the earth is ripe.
16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

15 a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the
16 earth is [1] ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

a ch. 16: 17....b Joel 3: 13; Matt. 13: 39....c Jer. 51: 33; ch. 13: 12.——1 Gr. *become dry*.

to their consummation. For such a consummation the harvest is, always, and when the reaper goes forth with his sickle and reaps and gathers in the ripe grain, the promise of the year is fulfilled, and its work achieved.

15. And another angel came out of the temple. Here, again, as in 11: 1, *seq.*, it is the inner sanctuary of the temple (ναός) that is meant. From this inner sanctuary, this holy place, and holy of holies, the angel comes; as when a messenger, or a minister comes from the presence, the cabinet of a king, made acquainted there with his purposes and commands, and commissioned now to make them known.—**Crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud.** Some have appeared to think that an angel, merely, would not be represented, even in vision, as speaking in tones of direction to one himself divine, and that therefore we must not see in him who sits upon the cloud the Lord himself. The difficulty is met by remembering that the angel speaks simply as commissioned, and as announcing the supreme divine purpose and will. The situation is, after all, quite consistent with the representation, throughout the New Testament, of our Lord as ever executing the will of the Father. In his incarnation, he takes the position of one acting as the instrument of a purpose. He can say, "I and my Father are one"; and yet, in another view of his purpose and mission, he can say, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." In that character and attitude he is seen here. He is "the Son of man," executing that divine purpose in which he himself shares, but of which he is the instrument. The words of the angel remind us of this, while at the same time they announce the fact that the time has come for the consummation of that great divine purpose and plan.—**Thrust in** [πέμψον, "*send*"] **thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe** [lit., *become dry*]. "There is a time to sow and a time to reap." There is a time, also, for the ground to be fallow, that it may be the more ready for the sower and the seed. As our Lord foreshadowed in one of his parables, the history of God's kingdom in this world has had very much of this analogy with those processes through which alike the seed and the soil in which it is sown must pass, ere the harvest come. The seeming delays in God's spiritual kingdom are much like those vicissitudes of the passing year in which the hopes of the husbandman are now encouraged and now clouded. There are even analogies to that which one sees when large tracts of country are given over to neglect, and allowed to return almost to their wilderness state. The rank vegetation, as it grows and dies, fattens the soil, and makes it the more productive when the plough once more rends its bosom and the seed is cast in. Somewhat like this are those aspects of Christian history which might otherwise seem so difficult of comprehension. But in God's husbandry the harvest, even "the harvest of the earth," the *whole* earth, is sure to come.

16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth [*cast his sickle upon the earth*], **and the earth was reaped** [or, "*harvested*"]. The preposition in the Greek (ἐπί, with the accusative), the revisers correctly translate "upon." Alford renders, "And he that sat upon the cloud put his sickle upon (into, from above) the earth." The action, of course, is wholly symbolical. The sickle is "cast" (ἔβαλεν) into the ripe harvest on the earth, and the harvesting follows. The action described is the casting of the sickle into the earth, not any act of reaping—the reaping follows, but *how*, is not said.

17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven. Again it is the inner sanctuary (ναός). **He also having a sharp sickle.** The significance of this appears in what follows.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, [a] which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, [b] Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into [c] the great winepress of the wrath of God.
20 And [d] the winepress was trodden [e] without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, [f] even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the [g] vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great *winepress*, of the wrath of
20 God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

a ch. 16 : 8....*b* Joel 3 : 13....*c* ch. 19 : 15....*d* Isa. 63 : 3; Lam. 1 : 15....*e* Heb. 13 : 12; ch. 11 : 8....*f* ch. 19 : 14.——1 Gr. *vine.*

18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over the fire. The meaning is more clear in the revised version: "He that hath power over the fire." This refers us back to ch. 8: 3-5; from which it appears that the altar spoken of is the altar of incense. The angel having "power [*authority*] over the fire," is the angel who, as there described, took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth." It was a signal of judgment, since "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" followed. The appearance of this angel having authority over the fire, in the vision now considered, is in like manner a signal of judgment. As he comes, also, from the altar of incense, where the "prayers of all the saints" are offered, we must connect with what is now about to follow those prayers of the saints, as is also done in the passage above quoted. We have seen the gathering in of the harvest of salvation. But in this, as in all the other visions, there is a reverse side to the picture. Besides the harvest there is the vintage.—**And cried with a loud cry** [*with a great voice*]**, to him that had the sharp sickle, saying.** It is the angel from the temple who is addressed. He, like the angel from the temple mentioned in ver 15, comes from the immediate presence of God, commissioned to execute divine purpose. The angel at the altar of incense, through whom the prayers of the saints receive their answers, as they cry to heaven for vindication and protection, gives to him the signal.—**Thrust in** ["*send*" (πέμψον)] **thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.** Carpenter says: "The vintage symbolizes a harvest of judgment; do not the words respecting Babylon (the wine of the wrath of her fornication, ver. 8) come to the mind, and confirm this? . . . And it is not without significance that the angel to whom this cry is addressed comes forth from the temple, the sanctuary of God's faithful ones, as one who has witnessed their secret sorrows and their sufferings, and is fitted to 'recompense tribulation' to the troublers of Israel (2 Thess. 1: 6)."

19. And the angel thrust in his sickle [*cast his sickle*] **into** [*upon*] **the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.** "Gathered *the vintage* of the earth" is better. The words "wine-press of the wrath of God" place the nature of the vintage beyond doubt. It is not as the harvest. That was mercy, gathering in the sheaves of salvation, as the precious grain is gathered and garnered; this is justice, casting the reaped clusters, *ripe* in wickedness, into "the winepress of the wrath of God"; thus symbolizing, not a garnering and a preserving, but crushing and final destruction. The two are, therefore, in vivid contrast.

20. And the winepress was trodden without the city. What city? Jerusalem, Alford thinks, "where the scene has been tacitly laid, with occasional express allusions, such as that in our ver. 1." Lange says: "In the symbolical apprehension of the passage, only the City of God can be meant. . . . . Nothing, therefore, save the vital church of God of the last time can be understood—in its quality, incontrovertibly, of passing into the visible appearance of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the imperishable City of God." Hengstenberg also thinks the church is meant, but the church in its militant state. Carpenter's note is: "The wine-presses usually stood outside the city; it is so represented here, not without an allusion to those who fall under the weight of this judgment because they have refused the defence of the true city and sanctuary." The mention in this connection of

Mount Zion (ver. 1), and of the temple (ver. 15, 17), would seem to indicate some general reference to Jerusalem. We must keep in mind the symbolism, however, and so doing, the general view suggested by Carpenter, in Ellicott, is better than, especially, any such overloading of the figures used, as in the paragraph from Lange, just quoted.—**And blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.** The symbolism, here, is of the most intense character, and we must be careful not to be betrayed into any obscuring literalism. Wine is called in Gen. 49: 11, and Deut. 32: 14, "the blood of grapes," not, says Hengstenberg, "on account of its red color, but because it is prepared from the juice and strength of grapes." The transition to the symbolism of actual blood is therefore the more easy. The mention of "the horse bridles" seems to introduce the idea of instruments used to execute the divine judgments, while the imagery employed simply sets forth the idea of the fearfulness of the judgments. We may compare with this passage ch. 19: 13, 14, 15. One appears clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; his name, "The Word of God." He is described as "treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." But "armies which are in heaven" follow, "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure." These are with him as he treads the wine-press of divine wrath. In our present passage the same general symbolism appears to be employed, although the details vary. We quote further from Hengstenberg: "Such is the *depth* of the sea of blood; but its *breadth* measures sixteen hundred stadia. We are here to take for our starting-post the holy city, before whose gates a sea of blood (a sea, not a river) begins, and completes a circle of sixteen hundred stadia. The number denotes a *judgment encircling the whole earth. Four*, the signature of the earth, is first multiplied by itself, aad then again by one hundred. Quite similar is the formation of the one hundred and forty-four thousand; the fundamental number is twelve, first multiplied by itself, and then by one thousand. Similar, also, is the formation of the number six hundred and sixty-six. According to several expositors, the number here must be the length of Palestine. But this proceeds on the false supposition that it is a *stream* of blood which is here spoken of, instead of a *sea* of blood. Besides, the length of Palestine cannot be made properly to square with such a measurement; so that we are thrown on mere conjecture, to which no license is given in the Apocalypse. Finally, one does not see what Palestine could have to do here, since throughout the Apocalypse it has no signification attached to it."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We are now approaching the close of the Dispensation, or age. The next chapter begins by announcing "the seven *last* plagues." In them, we are told, "is filled up," completed, "the wrath of God." His final visitations upon the sinful and hostile world, contemporaneous with the consummation of his purposes of grace and redemption, are now to be set forth in Apocalyptic scenery. "The statement," says Carpenter, "that these are the *last* plagues, seems to show that the set of visions now commencing carry us down to the end of the age; there are no other plagues after these; they are the last plagues; the vials, like the seals and trumpets, run up to the final consummation."

What we find in the closing verses of the chapter just considered, must, therefore, be looked upon as in some degree anticipatory of the events to be more particularly described in those immediately following. The fourteenth chapter, indeed, as a whole, seems to be a general picture of the period during which the gospel should have world-wide propagation, down, even, to the close of the period; this gospel propagation being attended by providential visitations vindicating the justice and sovereignty of God, set at naught by those who reject the gospel and seek to hinder its spread. The pivotal verses of the chapter appear to be the sixth, seventh, and eighth; in the first of which the gospel angel flying in the midst of heaven is described; in the second his proclamation; while in the third another angel follows him, proclaiming the fall of great Babylon. Those standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, with a notice of whom the chapter opens, are the great multitude gathered out of the world by the ministry of that gospel of redemption. Those who perish in the treading of the wine-press of God's wrath, are they whom Babylon has made to drink of the wine of the wrath of her

fornication, and who now partake of her doom. The chapter covers the whole period since the time when, at the Reformation, a true and pure gospel began to be proclaimed, during the ages of the great missionary enterprises of the church, in which the news of redemption is carried to all nations, down to that "end" which our Lord declared should "come" when this world-wide ministry should have been fulfilled.

We may say, therefore, that although the final consummation, in this ending of the gospel period and in the last judgment, is not solely indicated in this chapter, it is included. Events, too, are transpiring, meanwhile, which, in some sense, foreshadow it. God's purposes of mercy seem hastening to their final fulfillment. There are no more such delays as in previous ages have constrained the suffering saints to cry, "How long, O Lord?" Many hindrances are taken out of the way; many corrupting and misleading influences are held in check, or their operation overruled; the world's natural progress no longer prevents, but promotes the propagation of the truth, and the time comes when the apostolic declaration is literally true—"all things are yours." At the same time, the evil power so long dominant suffers fatal blows. Events occur which seem to foreshadow the final doom of apostasy and all organized hostility to God, and to his people, and to his truth. Even at this day in which we live there is truth in the declaration: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great"; so fast are the changes that have come upon what seemed once so secure against all change — such weakness and decrepitude have seized upon that which was once so strong.

If we have been correct in our interpretation of the symbolism of the *tenth* chapter, particularly the "little book," and the angel standing with one foot on the sea, and one on the land, we shall be justified in tracing a parallelism between what is found there, and what is written in the sixth verse of the present chapter. If the little book is the recovered gospel, especially with reference to its central, saving truth; and if the angel who holds it and delivers it to God's servant for communication to "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," stands thus upon the sea and the land, as claiming both for the field of gospel proclamation—then the general sense, there, is clearly the same as here, where the angel is seen "flying in midheaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people." In noticing that part of the tenth chapter, also, which speaks of the seven thunders and their voices, whose utterances the seer was not permitted to "write," we quoted the words of Durham, that these voices of the seven thunders may have been proclamations of the same judgments as in the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters are depicted in the pouring out of the seven vials, and the destruction of Babylon. At that stage of the revelation it was not fitting that these things should be declared; they are therefore reserved for a later one. If this view may stand, the parallelism noted above may be carried still further; and just as the period whose opening was signalized by the "little book" was one of gospel proclamation throughout the world, accompanied by signal judgments of God upon every form of "spiritual wickedness" and hostility, so in the present chapter, it is the same period, with the same two grand characterizing features.

We ought to note, before leaving the subject of this chapter, the significance of this connection of mercy with judgment in those dispensations of God which characterize, thus, "the last times." The great designs of his providence and grace in this way reach their consummation in those two aspects which belong to all history, yet which have not been wont, in the long past, to come forth in such clear and full manifestation. Wicked men in the world have often demanded, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud?" And the suffering and waiting saints have often called from the altar of their immolation for God to appear in vindication of himself and them, yet apparently without response. This will not always be. As events approach their consummation, they seem to hasten, as if eager to reach the goal; while "the mystery of God" is "finished" in the open and manifest execution of perhaps long-concealed designs. Men begin to see where was "the hiding of his power"; see where that power has wrought in events of the past which may have seemed of man and the earth only, and in contem-

CHAPTER XV.

AND [a]I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, [b]seven angels having the seven last plagues; [c]for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were [d]a sea of glass [e]mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast [f]and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, [e]having the harps of God.

1 AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, *which are* the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing [1]by the glassy sea, having harps

a ch. 12 : 1, 3....*b* ch. 16 : 1; 21 : 9....*c* ch. 14 : 10....*d* ch. 4 : 6; 21 : 18....*e* Matt. 3 : 11....*f* ch. 13 : 15; 16 : 17....*g* ch. 5 : 8; 14 : 2.—1 Or, *upon*.

porary events recognize his hand, alike in its "goodness" and in its "severity." We may come upon this thought again as we study the pouring out of the vials, and seek to find there some indications of that providence in judging and punishing which so accompanies the grace that causes proclamations of redemption to go forth in all the lands and languages of the world.

THE SEA OF GLASS AND THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES.

1-4. THE SEA OF GLASS.

1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous. Another wonderful "sign," foreshadowing things to come. The same word (σημεῖον) has before occurred at ch. 12 : 1, 3. Carpenter says, in his comment there: "It is a sign that is seen; not a mere wonder, but something which has a meaning; it is not a 'surprise ending with itself,' but a signal to arrest attention, and possessing significance; there is 'an idea concealed behind it.'"—**Seven angels having the seven last plagues.** "*Having seven plagues, the last.*" The Greek, which the revised version follows more exactly than the common one, emphasizes the fact that these are *the last* plagues. —**For in them is filled up** [*finished*] **the wrath of God.** In other words, these now to be described are final judgments; or, speaking more correctly, perhaps, judgments belonging to the last times. Those depicted in the seals and the trumpets were, as we then saw, in a manner synchronous; the visions, respectively, covering very nearly the same period, and relating in general to the same events. Resemblances with these, in general character, will be noted again in the visitations at the outpouring of the vials. But there is this important difference, that while those of the seals and the trumpets belong chiefly to the opening and intermediate centuries of the Christian Dispensation, these of the vials belong to its close. In this first verse of the chapter, however, these closing scenes are simply announced in a summary way, anticipating the more particular descriptions of chapters sixteen and seventeen.

2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire. The translation of the revisers, "a glassy sea," does not seem to express the exact force of the Greek words (ὡς ὑαλίνην), which mean "appearing as if made of glass." The *appearance* was that of a sea of glass. It had the clear, shining, crystal-like aspect which one sees in glass; but mingled with fire—an element alike of splendor and of terror. This same sea of glass seems to have been before described at ch. 4: 6, where it is spoken of as "before the throne." Once more, then, our attention is called to the fact that in these successive visions certain features are fixed and permanent. Once more the throne is before us, and the crystal sea in which both it and the form there seated are glassed. It seems to be agreed among expositors that the persons described in the words next following stand, not upon the sea itself, but upon the shore of the sea. Düsterdieck pronounces the former exposition unnatural, and "out of harmony with the scenery in ver. 4, 6." He also thinks that the symbolism, here, is in general like that in ch. 22: 1, *et. seq.*, where we read of "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." It is "on either side of the river," on the banks of it, that trees of life grow, their fruit gathered by the "nations" of the redeemed, there walking in glory and felicity. He conceives that in like manner, here, the "conquering" ones throng the banks of the crystal sea which mirrors the glory of the Enthroned One, and testifies to them in its crystal-like purity and its flame-like splendor how gracious, yet how just, how severe, yet how righteous, are those "ways" of God which become the theme of their song. "The

3 And they sing [a]the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, [b]Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; [c]just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

3 of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy thy ways,

a Ex. 15:1; Deut. 31:30; ch. 14:3....*b* Deut. 32:4; Ps. 111:2; 139:14....*c* Ps. 145:17; Hosea 14:9; ch. 16:7.

sea," says Hengstenberg, "denotes the great flood of the wonderful works of God, of his righteous and holy ways, of his judicial acts, manifested among men. The *glass* denotes their blamelessness and purity; and the sea being mingled with fire, indicates that it is chiefly about the manifestations of God's wrath, his punitive righteousness, that the vision is occupied." The whole scene in connection with the sea of glass, like the burden of the song given below, is plainly intended as a preparation for what is to come in the outpouring of the vials. The first verse has already spoken of these as "filling up" the wrath of God. In them his righteous severity against evil is exercised. This is symbolized in the sea of glass mingled with fire—setting forth, thus, in striking imagery, how pure and yet how awful is the divine justice when it awakes to punish. This, also, as we shall see, is in part the burden of the song of those who are now to be mentioned.—**And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand** [*standing*] **on the sea of glass.** "Them that come victorious from," etc. (*Revision*). The reference, here, to ch. 13:17, 18, is evident. The beast, his image, and the number of his name, seem to be used in the same general sense as where Paul says: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12. *Revision*). Those who stand upon the sea of glass are they who are conquerors over all these, and "more than conquerors" through him that hath loved them. The expression "victorious *from*" is taken by some commentators as indicating rather an *escape* than a victory after conflict. Perhaps it is both; since so often in our conflict with temptation, and with every manner of evil, we prevail because delivered in our weakness through him who is our strength.—**Having the harps of God.** The article should be omitted. "Sacred harps," says Alford, "part of the instruments of heaven, used solely for the praise of God." "The harps of God," says Düsterdieck, "are those which serve alone for the praise of God." "The phrase is not," says Carpenter, "to be considered as equivalent to very great or very glorious. The harps they hold are called harps of God, not merely because they are dedicated to him, but because they are truly God's. . . . If our power to sing in trial here a song worthy of God is only found in God, so will the songs of heaven be sweet only in him; for those who dwell there shall be all taught of him."

3. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God. Why is it called the song of Moses, the servant of God? Because it celebrates deliverance and victory, as was done in the song of Moses and the Children of Israel after the passage of the Red Sea—alike the deliverance and the victory being ascribed to God. These words of that ancient pæan may worthily be sung forever on the harps of heaven: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. . . . Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" (Exod. 15:2, 13). Carpenter, in Ellicott, says: "Israel stood on the margin of the Red Sea, and saw the tokens of the overthrow of the great world-power of that day; so these saints stand by the border of the fire-blent sea of glass, and sing the song of triumph over the doom of the great world-powers of every age."—**The song of the Lamb.** It is both of Moses and of the Lamb. Even the song of Moses was the song of the Lamb; for the Jehovah of the Old Testament was the Christ of the New. The "Angel of the Covenant," in both Dispensations, was one and the same. The song, therefore, is one: "Not two songs," says Lange, "sung respectively by Old and New Testament believers (Andreas); not the song of Moses applied to Christ and the things of Christ (Grotius); not a song composed at once by Moses and the Lamb

4 a Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for b all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

4 thou King of the 1 ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

a Ex. 15:14, 15, 16; Jer. 10:7....b Isa. 66:23.——1 Many ancient authorities read, *nations*.

(Ewald, Düsterdieck); but the whole redemption as mediated by Moses and by Christ, with a distinct reference to the song of Moses and the passage through the Red Sea, as a type of the passage through those rivers of fire by which the faithful of the last time shall be separated from the hardened sinners of that time."—**Saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true** [*righteous and true*] **are thy ways, thou King of saints** ["*of the ages*," *Revision*]. "King of the ages," meaning Eternal King, is the now accepted reading. Looking back from the point of final redemption, the saints of God realize much which was dim to them before. Far more than when his ancient people had reached the land toward which they had toiled during forty weary years, will the people of God, as their redemption draws nigh, have occasion to say, "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord God had spoken concerning the house of Israel; all came to pass." Then, in their song, even a review of God's dealings towards his own people will prompt the strain, "Righteous and true are thy ways." In their periods of trial, they may often have wondered at the methods alike of providence and of grace; yet even then they were enabled, "through faith," to work righteousness, to stop the mouths of lions, to quench the violence of fire, to escape the edge of the sword—"from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of the aliens." Much more, now, do they see how sure were those promises in which they trusted, how true and how strong was the arm on which they leaned. The words, "righteous and true are thy ways," may, however, have especial reference to those "ways" of God in which his righteousness and truth are vindicated. Not only does no word of promise fail, but no principle of righteousness fails of ultimate vindication; no word of denunciation against wrong and wickedness is spoken in vain. The triumph of evil, in the day of its exulting reign, is, as compared with the long eternity of its overthrow, but for a moment; while not one act of outrage against God and against his truth, his throne, and name, and people, goes unavenged. Thus are his "righteous acts" celebrated by these redeemed spirits, as "the seven angels having the seven plagues, the last," in which "is finished the wrath of God," are about to stand forth in their mission of judgment.

4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? The amended text omits "thee," so that the words stand, "Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The ground of the question is in what follows in the verse.—**For thou only art holy.** "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises."—**For all nations shall come and worship before thee.** Lange speaks of what is here uttered as "a genuine New Testament trait, as expressive of the hope that many shall yet be converted even under the ministry of the vials." Some writers, as De Burgh, quoted in the Speaker's Commentary, understand the words as equivalent to a prediction of the conversion of the world at our Lord's second coming. The Speaker's Commentary itself much more judiciously treats them as containing "the sum of the Old Testament predictions as to the conversion of the heathen." Taken in their whole connection, they appear to us simply declarative of the fact that connected with the visitations of the vials there will be the gathering in of gospel trophies, with the world's ultimate subjection to him "whose right it is." These visitations Lange very appropriately describes as "judgments of hardening," and we shall see, presently, in what sense this is eminently true of them. Yet they are judgments of hardening only for those who are directly the objects of them. There are others upon whom far other influences are at work, and these so wide in their operation and so effective as that the glowing words become true: "All nations shall come and worship before thee." The gospel ingathering, contemporaneous with the vial judgments, is so wide-reaching and so abundant, that the phrase, "all nations,"

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, [a]the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:
6 [b]And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, [c]clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was
6 opened: and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed [1]with *precious* stone, pure *and* bright, and girt about

a ch. 11: 19. See Num. 1: 50....*b* ver. 1....*c* Ex. 28: 6, 8; Ezek. 44: 17, 18; ch. 1: 13.—1 Many ancient authorities read, *in linen*.

may with propriety be used in describing it. The period of the vials, we may add, becomes thus the more evident. It is that period of gospel progress and triumph which belongs to the later ages of the Dispensation.—**For thy judgments are made manifest.** This is a reason given for what has just been disclosed. "Righteous acts," as rendered by the revisers, is more accurate. The Greek word here (δικαιώματα), is the same which, in ch. 19: 8, is by some, as we shall see in the note on that place, rendered "righteousness." The "fine linen" of the bride's apparel is there said to be the "righteousness" (δικαιώματα) —"righteous acts," the revisers render, both there and here—"of the saints." The rendering in this place of the common version by "judgments," is misleading. It is not simply the manifestation of God's judgments that brings all nations to worship him; it is the manifest *righteousness* of his judgments. What we understand, therefore, is, that the visitations of the vials, while they operate as punishment upon the direct objects of them, will at the same time be in such a way illustrative of God's righteousness as that the providences of his administration shall join with the gracious acts of redemption in subduing the world, and bringing it to his feet. The strong language used may even look forward to the triumphs and glories of that millennial age, of which we read in the twentieth chapter of our book.

5-8. The Angels of the Vials.

5. And after that [*after these things*] **I looked** [*I saw*]. The succession is not one of time, but of events; rather the seer's *observations* of them. The expression is equivalent to, "What I next saw," etc. It indicates, according to Hengstenberg, "that the main scene here begins, and that what went before has only the character of an introduction, a prelude."—**And, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony** [*the temple of the tabernacle of witness*] **in heaven was opened.** Again it is the inner temple, (ναός). The expression, "tabernacle of witness" occurs also at Acts 7: 44, where Stephen says in his address to the Sanhedrim: "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness." The phrase seems to be suggested by the fact that the ark of the covenant and the tables of stone (called, in Exodus 31: 18, "the tables of testimony") were for Israel, during the long period of their history, a "witness" of that covenant which God had made with them as his chosen people. As these were enshrined in the tabernacle, this last might appropriately be termed "the tabernacle of witness," and as the temple, upon its erection, served the ends of the tabernacle, this also might, with equal aptness of allusion, be styled "the temple of the tabernacle." These earthly things, however, were a "pattern of heavenly things"; and now, in the symbolism of the vision, they re-appear with the higher significance belonging to them as such. "It is," says Hengstenberg, "an elevated spectacle, when the temple of the tabernacle is opened in heaven—dreadful for the world, but joyful, though mingled with trembling, for the church."

6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues. The order of the words in the revised version is better. The angels came out from that inner temple, perhaps even from that holy of holies, where the symbols of Jehovah's covenant with his people were enshrined — from the immediate presence, therefore, of those tokens of the divine promise and faithfulness, which for so many ages were to his people a reminder and a pledge. These angels come, now, commissioned to fulfill that divine word. Their mission, therefore, is not one of wrath and judgment merely. It is, rather, the fulfillment of covenant promise. Not, however, the promise of blessing to his people alone, but of judgment upon their enemies, as well. If we turn to those passages in the Old Testament where promises are made to Israel, especially as the covenant people, we shall find

7 [a]And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, [b]who liveth for ever and ever.

7 their breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who

a ch. 4: 6....b 1 Thess. 1: 9; ch. 4: 9; 10: 6.

this second feature of them made exceedingly prominent: "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth" (1 Sam. 2: 10); "He shall judge [*vindicate, avenge*] the fatherless and the oppressed" (Ps. 10: 18); "Arise, O God, and judge the earth" (Ps. 82: 8); "He shall judge the world with righteousness" (Ps. 96: 13); He shall "judge among the heathen" (Ps. 110: 6); "He shall judge among many nations" (Isa. 2: 4); "Mine arm shall judge the people" (Isa. 51: 5). In these and like passages, reference is made immediately to those enemies of Israel who were their enemies because enemies of the God of Israel; but, in their typical and remoter sense, they cover that principle of divine administration in all its applications, which keeps in view the ends of *final justice*, and final and complete vindication of the divine administration itself. This, also, is a part of Jehovah's covenant with his people, and this, also, he will keep to the letter. In the succession of visions in our book, the instruments to this end are now seen coming forth; and as significant of their mission in this feature of it, they come from the sacred inner chamber, where the Shekinah is seen above the mercy-seat, and where the ark of the covenant stands. The expression, "having the seven plagues," is simply indicative of *office*. The "plagues" are actually given to them with the vials; but the words now read designate the seven angels officially.—**Clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.** The revision reads, "arrayed with *precious* stone, pure *and* bright" — the words in italics being supplied. The revisers follow the text of Westcott and Hort (ἐνδεδυμένοι λίθον καθαρὸν λαμπρὸν), which follows the Alexandrine manuscript. The Sinaitic reads, as translated, "clothed in pure, bright linen." The authorities for the two readings, respectively, seem to be very evenly balanced. Perhaps a deciding consideration might be the singularity of the reading, "*arrayed* with precious stone." A similar one is found, however, in the Septuagint, at Ezek. 28: 13, where the splendor of the King of Tyre is thus described: "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy *covering*, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond." The same Greek word, (ἐνδύω,) "to clothe, dress, put on," is used in the present passage. Westcott and Hort, in justifying the reading they prefer, quote also a similar expression from Chrysostom. The verb used by him, however, is different (ὁπλίζω), meaning "to arm, equip, encounter." Upon the other hand, the idea of "arrayed with precious stone," seems almost an impossible one. Alford says: "The remarkable reading "stone" (λίθον) can hardly be genuine, though strongly attested." He speaks, also, of "pure and glistening linen" as "the well-known clothing of angels and heavenly beings," and refers, in proof, to Acts 10: 30; Matt. 17: 2; and 28: 3; and to ch. 19: 8, in our present book. Lange rejects the reading "stone," wholly. Carpenter, in Ellicott, does not give any decision, although apparently preferring the word "linen" (λίνον). Düsterdieck seems to pronounce for "the more difficult reading," and suggests that the word "linen" (λίνον) in the Sinaitic manuscript was substituted for the correct one, because "stone" (λίθον) was thought to leave the sense so obscure. The point is not a vital one. Our own preferences lean toward the version, "arrayed in linen, pure and glistening." It is, as Alford shows, in such array that heavenly beings are described in various parts of the New Testament, while such a description seems far more congruous here. The pure and glistening apparel well becomes those who appear on the scene as ministers of the righteous purposes of the pure God. The golden girdles remind us of that which our Lord himself wears, as described in ch. 1: 13.

7. And one of the four beasts [*living creatures*] **gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials.** "Bowls," rather than "vials," is the proper word; for the Greek term (φιάλη), Alford says, means "a shallow bowl, or cup, in which they drew out of the mixing vessel" (κρατήρ). The question as to the significance of the fact that the vials are given by one of "the four living creatures,"

3 And [a] the temple was filled with smoke [b] from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

8 liveth [1] for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

[a] Ex. 40: 34; 1 Kings 8: 10; 2 Chron. 5: 14; Isa. 6: 4....[b] 2 Thess. 1: 9.—[1] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

may be a difficult one. Hengstenberg explains thus: "That the vials are presented to angels by one of the four beasts is explained by ch. 16: 1: 'Pour out the seven vials of the wrath of God on *the earth.*' The cherubim [as such he views the beasts] act here as the representatives of the living creatures of the earth, on which the judgments of God are to alight." Alford takes a similar view. He regards the living creatures (ζῶα), as "representatives of *creation*"; and one of these gives the vials, "inasmuch as the coming plagues are to be inflicted on the objects of creation." This is true only in part. The fifth vial (ch. 16: 10) is poured out "upon the beast," and it is his "kingdom" that is filled with "darkness" and "pain." Besides, it can hardly be denied, we think, by any one, that "the objects of creation" mentioned under the several vials are named in a wholly symbolical manner. It will not be claimed that there are, have been, or will be, *literal* fulfillments of what is thus shadowed forth. The real objects of the visitation are men, and the world of nature is only used in the description for purposes of imagery. The reason given above for the fact under consideration does not seem, therefore, quite adequate. Carpenter's statement appears to be better: "These vials are given by one of the living creatures who represent creation; it is through creation that the wrath of God can visit the rebellious; that wrath of God is simply the operation of God's righteous law against sin. His statutes are eternally righteous. He has given to all things a law which cannot be broken; that law is adverse to evil, and will in the end cast it out, for it does the bidding of God, who lives unto the ages of the ages." Dr. Vaughan's comment is: "These incense-bowls are given to the ministering angels by one of the four living beings who represent creation. The agencies of which we are about to read as employed in the judgments which follow are, in form at least, judgments upon natural objects, and judgments by natural instruments also." It may be proper to connect with the passage under consideration those powerful words of the apostle in Rom. 8: 19, 20, 21: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (*Revision.*) Viewing the living creatures as representatives of the physical creation, it seems, in the light of such a conception of its participation in the effects of the fall, as this in the passage just cited, eminently suitable that they should, in the symbolism of the vision, be seen deeply interested in the events through which the final "revealing of the sons of God" is drawn on. Repeatedly on former occasions we have found them sharing with the four and twenty elders in pæans of praise to God, as the creator, and the righteous sovereign. Here, again, they exhibit a like participation, and by their act of giving the judgment-vials to the instruments of divine purpose, indicate the fact that not man alone, but the whole universe of being is in waiting for "the new heaven, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—**Full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever.** It is important not to lose sight of the fact that God's "wrath" in such places as this is to be understood only in the sense proper to an infinitely good and just being. It is that holy indignation which arms itself against all wickedness, and that absolute punitive justice which is as essential in the conception of a perfect ruler, as is the mercy that pities, and when it may, forgives.

8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. In the sixth of Isaiah we read: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the

Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." This impressive picture seems to be here reproduced. What we are made to see, is the manifested presence of God; the "smoke," here, answering to the "cloud" so often associated with manifestations of the divine presence.—**And no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.** "*Finished*," or "*ended*," would be an accurate rendering of the Greek. An impressive way, it would seem, of setting forth the inexorableness of the doom now about to fall on those who are the objects of the visitation. None can enter the temple to intercede. From that sacred place and that awful Presence, the ministers of judgment go forth, and "the door is shut."

EXCURSUS C.—THE VIALS.

From the beginning of the twelfth chapter of the book, as already explained, the visions we are studying present to us the Kingdom of God, *in its essential nature*, as in conflict with that which is *most essential* in antichristian hostility. We thus distinguish this part of our book from the portion comprehended between the fourth and eleventh chapters, inclusive, where the view presented is more of the external and outward relations of the church to the world. The imagery in this earlier portion, as several times noted, rests upon Israelitish history as recording events growing out of the relations of Israel with their heathen enemies. In that later portion of the book with which we are now dealing, it is the Church of God as distinctively *Christian* that comes into view; and the two great powers whose struggle is thus vividly represented on the Apocalyptic scene, are, upon the one side, Christ and his church; upon the other, Antichrist and the deadly array of forces, earthly, sensual, and devilish, marshaled under his banner.

The pivotal passages in the earlier section of the book thus distinguished (chs. 4-11), are those of the seals and the trumpets. One fact, now, it is pertinent to our present purpose to notice. At the opening of the seventh seal, the movement of the vision comes to a pause, while, as in the shifting of the scenery in the exhibition of some great drama, an entirely new set of representations begins, with the coming forward of the trumpet-angels. The sounding of the seventh trumpet, in like manner, is followed by results different from those of either of the preceding six. We hear it as a blast of triumph, and immediately is heard the loud acclaim, "The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* [the possession] of our Lord and of his Christ" (Revision)."

As the seventh seal is opened, we are told that "there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour." This we have interpreted as indicating a pause in the Apocalyptic movement, with intimation of the peace and rest which follow the long and hot ordeal of Christian trial. There may be in this a glancing forward to the final end, yet the point in the Apocalyptic development distinctively reached, we take to be the same as that indicated by the seventh trumpet. This we have explained as being, not the end of the world, or of the Dispensation, but the appearance of a great and momentous *epoch;* the closing of that period of fierce *ordeal* which had lasted through so many centuries, and the beginning of a new order, in which the Kingdom of God enters upon a series of triumphs that shall last on to the end. It is to this subsequent period that the vials belong. They do not represent the same period, nor the same events, as the seals and the trumpets. They belong to that period in which the truth of those words shall be historically made certain—"the kingdom of the world is become the possession of our Lord and his Christ." They are the reverse side of that picture, on which are seen revealed the victories of redemption, the triumph of the Redeemer and "them that are with him" over Antichrist and all his array.

If this view be a just one, then the study of the two chapters, especially, to be next taken up, the sixteenth and seventeenth, will have for us an interest even greater than in the case of those already considered. For the period to which they relate is the period to which our own age belongs; the period reaching from that great epoch, the Reformation, down to the end of the Dispensation. The twelfth and thirteenth chapters have rapidly sketched, in outline, the fortunes of the Kingdom of God, from the birth of the

CHAPTER XVI.

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple saying [a] to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials [b] of the wrath of God upon the earth.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

a ch. 15: 1....b ch. 14: 10; 15: 7.

Man-child, through those vicissitudes which followed upon the development of the anti-christian spirit, down to the same point as was indicated by the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet. The fourteenth chapter opens with a general picture of the redeemed multitude, standing on Mount Zion, while all heaven resounds with the new song of redemption. Then appears the gospel angel flying in mid-heaven with a proclamation of glad tidings for the whole world, indicating that the time has at last come when, indeed, as the Lord promised, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached unto all nations." At the same time great Babylon falls; the power that had been so prosperous in wickedness, so formidable in its hostility, so seductive and yet so fierce, reads the hand-writing of its own final doom. Then comes upon the scene one "like unto the Son of man," and reaps the ripe harvest that grows from the world-wide sowing of the seed; and next the angel of judgment with his own sharp sickle gathering the vintage of the earth's wickedness, and casting it into "the wine-press of the wrath of God." All this is general and anticipatory. With the fifteenth chapter a new series of visions begins, and that which had before been thus delineated as if in outline appears in detail, while the prophecy becomes more easy of elucidation from the stand-point of history. The sixteenth and seventeenth chapters describe the pouring out of the vials, with the effects that follow. The eighteenth chapter is a wonderfully vivid description of the overthrow of Babylon, or the final destruction of Antichrist; following which, to the end of the book, the pictures are all descriptive of the victories and glories of redemption, with only incidental mention of calamities that visit the enemies of God—save that, in the closing verses of the twentieth chapter we have the awful picture of the last judgment.

The vials, then, are to be explained in the light of recent history, and in that of events now passing. Possibly some difficulty may be suggested by the nature of the effects which, in the vision, follow the pouring out of the vials, severally. If the reader, however, has accepted the system of exposition in the case of the seals and the trumpets, he will readily see how all the imagery, forceful and striking as it is, must be taken. The fact that it *is* imagery is the key to the whole difficulty. It is perfectly consistent with the prophetic method in this book, as has again and again become evident, that objects in the material world, and visitations of a physical nature, represent in symbol events in history, in human experience, and even in the sphere of spiritual things. We are not, therefore, to understand any of these descriptions *literally*, but view them as imagery, and seek for that, under the imagery, which will be for us their true meaning.

It will be noticed, as we proceed in our exposition, that the "seven plagues" have certain striking resemblances to those which were visited upon Egypt, as described in Exodus. This is simply, again, the prophetic method followed, more or less, throughout this book. To a very large extent, the Old Testament history supplies the Apocalyptic imagery. And this is quite in keeping with the New Testament method, as a whole. The newer record continually refers back to the older one; the history in the New Dispensation links on to the history in the Old Dispensation; the prophecies of the Old are fulfilled in the New; the law, even, "is become our tutor, to bring us to Christ." (*Revised Version*). So it is here. The prophet of the New Testament clothes his visions in the costume of the Old, and we are thus made to see how the whole record is one; that it is one Kingdom of God whose law is revealed, whose privileges are declared, whose earthly fortunes are described or foreshadowed, and whose final glory is predicted, from the first word of the first inspired prayer to the final benediction at the close.

THE POURING OUT OF THE VIALS.

1, 2. The First Vial.

1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple. We must recall what is described in the closing verse of the previous chapter; the temple filled with tokens of the divine

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial [a] upon the earth; and [b] there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men [c] which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them [d] which worshipped his image.

2 And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and [1] it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast, and who worshipped his image.

[a] ch. 8:7....[b] Ex. 9:9, 10, 11....[c] ch. 13:16, 17....[d] ch. 13:14.——1 Or, *there came.*

presence, and all save that presence excluded. This "voice," therefore, is a divine voice, and the command a command of God himself.—**Saying to the seven angels, Go your ways** [*Go ye*] **and pour out the seven vials** [*bowls*] **of the wrath of God upon** [*into*] **the earth.** As before explained, the word translated "vials" is properly "bowls." They are bowls "of the wrath of God"; that is to say, they represent the judgment side of his dispensations—visitations upon opposing powers and forces which are in the world at the same time with the instruments and methods of redemption, and are in an attitude of continual hostility and opposition to these. The expression, "wrath of God," must not be misinterpreted. It is in some sense a strongly figurative one. It is "wrath" in that only meaning of the word which is consistent with the character and acts of a holy being; not vindictive wrath, not a mere outburst of violence, but righteous indignation felt toward the evil, and the visitation upon it of deserved punishment. By as much as God approves the good, he disapproves the bad; by as much as he desires and delights in the welfare of all sentient being, by so much is his displeasure excited against that which creates and propagates misery; and while his power is active in lending efficiency to the instrumentalities by which he saves, the same power is also active in subduing and ultimately paralyzing that which destroys. Thus the manifestation of God in history has the two sides, mercy and judgment. It is the judgment-side that is here brought to view. That God permits, for a time, the apparent triumph of evil—that he even allows it to exist at all—is one of those mysteries which cannot now be solved. Though he permits it, however, he does not tolerate it, and the day of its doom is sure to come. The expression, "Go your ways," is an old English form, for which the revisers properly substitute the better one, "Go ye." The preposition translated in the common version "upon" (εἰς), means "into." The vials are poured out "into the earth" just as in ch. 8:5, the fire from the altar is cast into the earth, as the trumpets are about to sound.

2. And the first went and poured out his vial upon [*into*] **the earth.** The words "earth," "sea," "rivers," "fountains," "sun," "air," etc., seem to be used in this chapter, with the exception of the word earth in ver. 1, with symbolical meaning. The whole representation, as noted above in "Excursus C," is imagery, events in the world of men and in history being set forth under a symbolism resting on objects and incidents in the world of nature. The word "earth," in ver. 1, appears to be used in a general sense, embracing alike the world of nature and the world of men; in ver. 2 in a more special sense; antithetical to "sea," in ver. 3. The mention of "the beast" in ver. 2 may help to explain the symbolism in the word "earth." The wild beast mentioned in ch. 13: 11, comes "up out of the earth." This we have explained as that later development of Antichrist seen in a corrupt ecclesiasticism and an oppressive hierarchy, the Rome of the Papacy, "exercising all the power" of the beast out of the sea, which is Antichrist in his development as a hostile and persecuting world-power. In this second verse of our chapter, the first judgment vial is poured out upon the earth whence the second beast, or the spiritual Antichrist, comes forth; in other words, it is a visitation upon that system of "spiritual wickedness" represented and embodied in the papal Antichrist.—**And there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.** The second beast, we are told in ch. 13: 12-16, compelled "the earth and them who dwell therein" to receive the mark of the first beast "in their right hand and in their forehead," and also that they should make and worship "an image to the beast." This he does while "exercising all the power of the first beast before him." In this way it is indicated how the oppressive and persecuting spiritual power re-produced in itself all the worst elements of the oppressive and per-

3 And the second angel poured out his vial [a] upon the sea; and [b] it became as the blood of a dead *man:* [c] and every living soul died in the sea.

3 And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and [1] it became blood as of a dead man; and every [2] living soul died, *even* the things that were in the sea.

a ch. 8:8....b Ex. 7:17, 20....c ch. 8:9.—1 Or, *there came*....2 Gr. *soul of life.*

secuting secular power; the Rome of the Papacy was the Rome of the empire under a new and even worse form. That subjection which it claimed and enforced was a submission to, and adoration of, the tyrannical usurpation practiced by the emperors, and now renewed by the popes. The "mark" (χάραγμα), was a sign of subjection, or servitude. By those, therefore, who "had the mark of the beast" and "worshipped his image" are meant the subjects and servants of the papal Antichrist. What we read here of the "noisome and grievous sore" reminds us of the "boils" in the sixth Egyptian plague (Ex. 7:20). The word translated "sore" means, in the Greek, a running sore, ulcer, or boil. That ancient visitation is thus made the basis of the imagery used in the present passage. The oppressive, tyrannical, and God-defying Pharaoh was himself "the beast" in one of his earliest forms of historical manifestation. The physical judgment sent upon him and his people was an example, and in some sense a type, of the judgment with which God will sooner or later visit every form of iniquitous usurpation. What was there physical, however, is here spiritual; or rather, by the "sore," must be understood what is of the mind rather than of the body—that consciousness of impending overthrow, the torment of internal dissension, and "the fearful looking-for of judgment" which comes upon iniquitous and oppressive powers as the day of doom for them draws on. There was a time when Antichrist feared nothing, in heaven or in earth. Earthly powers acknowledged his supremacy, and even his blasphemous pretensions to a divine prerogative appeared to pass unchallenged. But that time passed away. And now for a long period, the "noisome and grievous sore," of conscious decline and impending doom has fallen upon this evil power and upon all who have borne at its bidding the mark of the beast, and have worshiped his image.

3. THE SECOND VIAL.

3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon [*into*] **the sea.** The "sea," in the symbolism of this book, represents, according to Lange, "the worldly life of states and nations"; according to Carpenter, in Ellicott, "the tumultuous impulses and passions of the masses." Both these are no doubt included in the conception as complete. It was out of this sea that Antichrist, as the first beast—the hostile world-power—arose. The appearance of the second beast does not imply the *dis*appearance of the first; only the two are confederate in their war upon the kingdom of God, while the "power" of the first "exercised" by the second, makes this later form of the antichristian development all the more formidable. Especially does that sea of disturbed and tumultuous world-life out of which the first beast arises, remain. A time will come when there shall be "no more sea" (ch. 21:1), but that time is not yet.—**And it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.** Literally, "every soul of life"—"in its physical sense," says Alford, "of animal soul." The final clause of the verse may properly have the more full rendering of the revised version, "*even* the things that were in the sea." We are reminded of the first Egyptian plague (Ex. 7:20); also of the effect following the sounding of the second trumpet in ch. 8:8, 9, of this book, where "a great mountain burning with fire" is cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea becomes blood, the third part of the creatures in it die, and a third part of the ships are destroyed. What we have in our present passage must not be taken as a repetition of the one just mentioned, nor as referring to the same events. The differences are obvious. The resemblance is in the fact that the visitation now is upon the same form of disturbed human life, with like effects. This effect, however, is more complete; for "*every soul* of life" and the things that are in the sea "die," instead of only "a third part," as before, So, also, does the form of the visitation differ. It is not, now, as in ch. 8:8, 9, a great world-power, the Roman Empire, bursting into volcanic eruptions, ex-

4 And the third angel poured out his vial [a] upon the rivers and fountains of waters; [b] and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, [c] Thou art righteous, O Lord, [d] which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

4 And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; [1] and [2] it became 5 blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who wast, thou

a ch. 8: 10....b Ex. 7: 20....c ch. 15: 3....d ch. 1: 4, 8; 4: 8; 11: 17.——1 Some authorities read, *and they became*... 2 Or, *there came.*

uloding in fragments, blazing in self-destruction, and destroying in turn on every side; it is a less obvious but more destructive visitation. The pouring out of the vial is a silent act, such as God's dispensations so often are. There are no immediate signs of a great world cataclysm taking place. Yet the judgment is all the more awful because of this silence, and its effects more terrible because an immediate and direct dispensation of indignant divine justice. Yet we observe that "the sea" itself is made the instrument of the punishment. Its waters become blood, and these destroy the life that is in them. It is through processes inherent in the nature of man, of events, and of that system of things which he has ordained, that God works, in judgment equally as in mercy. "The worldly life of states and nations," says Lange, "becomes the subject of a process of decomposition which leads to death. Consummate passionate subjectivism and party-spirit, in all the forms of senseless self-intoxication, in mercantile, socialistic, absolutist, and many other directions, finally rupture all social, popular, and political coherence. The sea becomes *blood*, and this blood is as that of *a dead man;* dead blood. All the goods of the social life of the nations lose their vital value, because they have become the property of consummate egoism. They are dead like the men who determine their value, and operate fatally upon every one who would carry on his life in this sea of blood. Every living being, it is declared, died in the sea." Says Carpenter: "The sea, out of which the wild beast rose, from which the world-power drew strength, is turned to blood, the blood as of a dead man, corrupt and loathsome. The sea represented the tumultuous impulses and passions of the masses; there is a certain healthy force in these, but under certain conditions, when devoted to selfishness and earthliness, they become corrupt and deadly. Ruled by God and by right, the voice of multitudes is melodious as the voice of the sea, and the free movement of peoples like the ocean, a health-giving moral environment to nations; but swayed by impulse, or directed by worldliness, they become an element of corruption, killing every token of a better life." How the prophecy as thus expounded is fulfilled in the history of recent times, with other fulfillments yet to come, we notice in the General Comments below.

4-7. THE THIRD VIAL.

4. And the third angel poured his vial upon [*into*] **the rivers and fountains of** [*the*] **waters; and they became** [*it became*] **blood.** Something like this, also, is described (ch. 8: 10) as occurring at the sounding of the third trumpet. "A great star" falls "from heaven. . . burning as a torch; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters. . . . and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." In our present passage the waters become blood. The symbolism of the rivers and the fountains of waters is the same in both places; and there is a similarity in the causes and the effects described. But, as in the case before noticed, there are also differences. The causes now operating are more sweeping, and their effects still more destructive. Those sources and currents of national life from which and by which it is sustained, are now worse than embittered—they are turned to blood. Knowledge becomes deadly, opinion corrupt and poisonous, those elements of faith, virtue, piety, so essential in the mental life of peoples, equally as in the soul-life of the individual, undergo deadly transformation.

5. And I heard the angel of the waters say. Grotius, quoted by Alford and Düsterdieck, interprets "the angel of the waters" as meaning the angel who poured out the vial into the waters. Düsterdieck thinks the angel symbolizes the waters, as the four living beings symbolize creation in general. De Wette understands the guardian angel of the waters. Lange proposes a mystical signification, which need not be even quoted. The angel of the waters appears to be a purely symbolical being, like the four angels mentioned in ch. 7: 1: "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds

6 For [a]they have shed the blood [b]of saints and prophets, [c]and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, [d]Lord God Almighty, [e]true and righteous *are* thy judgments.
8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial [f]upon the sun; [g]and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

6 Holy One, because thou didst thus [1]judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are
7 worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.
8 And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto [2]it to scorch men with fire.

a Matt. 23:34, 35; ch. 13:15....*b* ch. 11:18; 18: 20....*c* Isa. 49:26....*d* ch. 15: 3....*e* ch. 13:10; 14:10; 19:2....*f* ch. 8:12....*g* ch. 9:17, 18; 14:18.—1 Or, *judge. Because they . . . prophets, thou hast given them blood also to drink*....2 Or, *him.*

of the earth." In all these instances the angelic forms introduced belong entirely to the scenery of the vision.—**Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.** A change of reading is given by Westcott and Hort, which the revised version follows in rendering "thou Holy One," in place of "and shalt be," while the words, "O Lord," are omitted. The angel of the waters is in the vision as if charged with the guardianship of the rivers and fountains. He now appears as recognizing the justice of the visitation upon these.

6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. There is a change of subject, here; "they" referring to those who are the human subjects of the visitation; those who drink of these rivers and fountains now changed to blood. The designation of them as those who "poured out" the blood of saints and prophets is intentionally broad and general, being made to include actual persecutors, and those who in a later time have and manifest the persecuting spirit. "They are worthy"—they have deserved that blood shall be given them to drink, since they have been so willing to shed the blood of the righteous. **And I heard another out of the altar say.** Both the Sinaitic and the Alexandrine manuscripts read: "I heard the altar saying," (ἤκουσα τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου λέγοντος). This reading the revised version adopts. The note by Carpenter is: "The altar beneath which the souls of the martyrs cried, and on which the prayers of the saints were offered, is represented as confirming the testimony to the just dealings of God." —**Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.** Thus does the altar respond to the angel. "Over against the praise of Jehovah," says Lange, "the voice from the altar brings in view the almighty sovereignty of God, the rule of Elohim Sabaoth; and instead of God's holiness it magnifies, together with the *righteousness*, the *truth* of the judgments of God."

8, 9. THE FOURTH VIAL.

8. The fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun. We must refer again to the eighth chapter, in the twelfth verse of which we find the sun used in a symbolism akin to that which is seen here. Only in that place the sun is "smitten," its light dimmed, also that of the moon and the stars, so that "the third part of them is darkened." We have explained this, in our notes upon the passage, as descriptive of that obscuration of the divine light of revelation, and that corruption of Christian teaching which brought on those centuries of darkness during which Christianity was experiencing its great ordeal. Assuming that the same symbolism is employed here, we must especially notice that while in the former passage this light is dimmed, it is here made to have a "scorching" quality; for, **power was given** [or, "*it was given*"] **unto him** [or, "*it*" the sun] **to scorch men with fire.** It is said (Mal. 4:2) of the Sun of Righteousness, that upon them who fear the name of God he shall arise "with *healing* in his wings." Where revelation is compared to the sun, allusion must in like manner be made to that beneficent action of the great luminary in which all nature lives and rejoices. But that which is the instrument of blessing may become also the instrument of suffering. The rays of the sun, when fierce and burning—the *fire* element predominating over the *light* element—may blast and wither, instead of stimulating to growth and clothing with beauty. In a like way divine revelation, through the abuses of human fanaticism, folly, and unbelief, may, in visitations of divine judgment, and as a punishment of the headiness and high-mindedness of men, "scorch" as with fire. This effect may come in two ways—in that violent and bitter unbelief to which men may be driven

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and [a] blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: [b] and they repented not [c] to give him glory.
10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial [d] upon the seat of the beast; [e] and his kingdom was full of darkness; [f] and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
11 And [g] blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and [h] their sores, [i] and repented not of their deeds.

9 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.
10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and
11 they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

[a] ver. 11 : 21....[b] Dan. 5 : 22, 23; ch. 9 : 20....[c] ch. 11 : 13; 14 : 7....[d] ch. 13 : 2....[e] ch. 9 : 2....[f] ch. 11 : 10....[g] ver. 9, 21....[h] ver. 2....[i] ver. 9.

in their hatred of the truth, and in the fanatical extremes into which those may fall who through misinterpretations of the word are carried away by mystical dreams, or deceived by outrageous impostors, or become the victims of passionate revolt against all truth and all authority. It was said of the Wonderful Child (Luke 2 : 34, 35), that he should be "for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." And, indeed, the Christ, and that revelation of which he is the centre and soul, have been in the world, and never more than in these later centuries, a *test* of the world's true moral condition. As the Bible has been made free for the reading and study of all, it has, while administering instruction and comfort to those receiving its teachings in simple faith, stirred to a more bitter antagonism those who, resolved not to receive it, or allow its authority as a revelation, have armed themselves against it. The very nature of a revelation, besides, affords opportunity for those perversions and extravagances to which diseased imagination or the spirit of imposture may incite men. It opens brief and dim glimpses of those mysteries of the universe of which it is so natural for men to covet a knowledge, and to covet it the more as they have reason to know that it is forbidden. Thus alike in the way of unbelief and of deception, revelation may be abused, and God's best gift be turned to a blighting curse.

9. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God. The daring language in which infidelity has given utterance to its defiance of God, or to the denial of his very existence, is a fact only too conspicuous and well known. Not less blasphemous are those impostures which, pretending to found themselves in the written word, or in some new revelation, have misled so many. Indeed, the spirit of blasphemy has burned the more intensely as the utterance or the pretense has become more antagonistic to the truth. For it is the nature of truth to avenge itself upon those who fight it or pervert it, by either the hardening process which renders the soul more and more inaccessible to all that is good, and more and more a prey to all that is bad; or by stinging it with fierce involuntary convictions which startle it at times with the dread consciousness of God's anger and of overhanging doom. Thus the very revelation itself becomes an instrument of punishment; and the more blasphemers cry out against him who **hath power over these plagues,** the more they suffer.—**And they repented not to give him glory.** It is neither in the experience nor in the dread of divine judgment that repentance has its birth.

10, 11. THE FIFTH VIAL.

10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat [*throne*] **of the beast.** By the beast we always understand Antichrist; here it is Antichrist in that manifestation of the antichristian spirit which belongs especially to the last times. The pouring out of the vial upon his "throne" must indicate visitations which threaten his power at its centre and "seat." "The throne of the beast," says Lange, "is the principal system upon which the power of the antichristian life of the people rests." Events threatening to the supremacy, and the very existence of the Roman Antichrist, the Papacy, must be especially intended.—**And his kingdom was full of darkness.** "*Became filled with darkness.*" The basis of the imagery, here, is the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex. 10 : 21), the "darkness which might be felt." In like manner the "kingdom" of Antichrist is darkened at the pouring out of the fifth vial. This darkness, however, is not material, nor yet is it moral; for the latter is the permanent condition of antichristianity, and this now described is a condition induced by a special cause.—**They gnawed their tongues for pain.** "They" means the subjects of the antichristian kingdom. The darkness is a condition attended by "pain," suffering.

11. And blasphemed the God of heaven

because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. Taking the whole representation together, it seems clearly to point to a condition such as befalls the adherents and supporters of some evil power, when a blow smites it at the very "seat," upon the very "throne" of its dominion, and sends consternation and confusion through its whole extent. The "darkness" which follows is the darkness of bewilderment and fear; the lurid light by which they had walked fails them, and they grope about in uncertainty and in the agony of those who fear the worst without being able to see, at all, when or how it may come. There will be a period in the history of every such power when its policy is clear, its purpose decided, its means ample, and its right onward course from strength to strength unwavering. It may seem to carry all before it, and its supremacy seem sure and permanent. But there comes a reverse. A blow is given it that sends a shock through its whole extent. Those who have built everything upon their assurance of the stability of this power are struck with consternation. The "pains" and "sores," distressing doubt and agonizing apprehension, eat into their very life. Yet they "repent not." Instead they "blaspheme the God of heaven." They cry out against him because it has pleased him that not the evil, but the good, not the wicked but the righteous, not the kingdom of Antichrist, but the kingdom of his own "Beloved Son," shall prevail and stand. Is not this an epitome of antichristian history in these late centuries?

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We will say at once that we regard the period of the vials as that period to which our own age belongs. The resemblances seen in the vision under each vial to what appeared under the seals and the trumpets, especially the latter, are simply those which occur often in history, and are among the ways in which history repeats itself. The differences, as noticed in the exposition, plainly indicate that the scenic forshadowing is not of *the same* events, but of *like events*. The same great forces—the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the beast—appear on the scene, but in a different attitude as to each other. The seals and trumpets exhibit them in conflict. Under the vials, the Kingdom of God has prevailed, and the kingdom of the beast, visited with judgments, is "filled with darkness" and with torment. "The kingdom of the world" is no longer the kingdom of the beast; it "is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and *he* shall reign." The period, therefore, is one in which Redemption triumphs and "the accuser of the brethren is cast down."

It is worthy of notice under what aspect incidents in the moral, intellectual, social, and political history of this period are made to appear, as represented on the Apocalyptic scene. Those phenomena of modern life which to the contemporary generation seem so formidable, as if they were signs that the enemy prevails, are here seen as visitations of judgment. National disturbances, socialistic frenzies, the ravings of fanaticism, malicious outbursts of the persecuting spirit, infidel blasphemy, surpassing even what any former age could show—these things often seem like signs that the evil forces of the universe are prevailing, and as if God had given over the world to be ravaged by them. In the imagery of our chapter, they are seen as, instead, visitations of divine anger; the writhings of evil under processes of divine procedure in which the final destruction is hastened on.

These aspects of modern life to which we are referring are at the same time such in their nature as might be looked for under existing conditions. The Reformation, itself a revolution, became the parent of many such. It set free human forces, originated tendencies and threw open doors of opportunity, in their measure unexampled in history. These could not, as things are in this world, all be salutary, in development and result. Political freedom was sure to be abused; intellectual freedom, as man is constituted, and with all his bad passions in full vigor, was sure to degenerate more or less into the riot of intellectual revolt, insubordination, and wild uproar; even that most precious gift of all, a free Bible, would be most of all abused, and, as the sun of the moral heavens, become to some a blasting curse, while to others a beneficence and a blessing. It is under circumstances such as these supposed, that the gospel becomes, if to some "a savor of life unto life," to others "a savor of death unto death."

The symbolism which describes the waters of the sea, and even the rivers and fountains, as turned to blood, should be especially noticed. We refer the reader again to the interpretation of this symbolism in Carpenter and by Lange, as quoted above. It will be seen that these judicious expositors understand by it disastrous changes in "the worldly life of states and nations," and "corrupt and deadly" conditions seen in "the tumultuous impulses and passions of the masses." Scarcely any other feature of secular life in the modern period characterizes it more. Conspicuous instances might easily be named; such as the fanatic and immoral excesses which dishonored the Reformation-movement itself; the tyrannies and oppressions by which dominant systems, during centuries of war, misrule, and general misery, sought to repress and kill every uprising of popular freedom, whether in things secular or in things religious; that hideous orgie of murder and every imaginable crime, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, representative of a long catalogue of like enormities; the horrors of the French Revolution; and, as belonging to our own times, the socialistic and nihilistic outbreaks often so formidable. These, while they arise under the operation of causes inherent in the very nature of existing systems, are none the less a visitation of God upon the upholders of those systems, and upon those, no less, who imagine that wickedness is cured by wickedness. The "violent dealing" instigated, not by a just and intelligent view of human right and human duties, but by the bad passions of bad men, while it may punish the oppressor against whom it is aimed, returns to plague the inventors of it. More of this is no doubt yet to come in the history of the modern world; but whether present, past, or yet future, it is then rightly understood when seen as the visitation of a righteous divine indignation against that deep-seated evil of the world which displays itself in communistic revolt no less than in the despotisms by which such revolt is instigated—the angels of the vials, pouring out "the wrath of God."

Much might be said of the later fortunes of the Roman Antichrist, as illustrating one part of the exposition proposed above. There is a striking contrast between the proud, confident, self-assured, and domineering attitude of the Papacy during ages preceding the Reformation, and its attitude during the times which have followed that great event. Whoever seeks to understand the subject will be the more convinced as he studies it more thoroughly, that the shock given by that event to the papal system was a fatal one, and that it has ever since been felt as such. While in those countries of Europe—England, Scotland, Germany, France—which were the representative nations of that period, the papal authority was in some cases completely overthrown and in others greatly weakened, the tendency toward revolt spread far and wide among those peoples who still acknowledged the claims of the Roman See. The policy of the popes themselves was such as to foster, rather than repress, the tendency toward reformation principles. Not only in the wars carried on in Italy between the several Italian princedoms and states, but in those upon the wider theatre of Europe as a whole, they took such a part as to disgust intelligent men even among their own adherents; while among the Roman Catholic nations of Europe themselves, the effect was such that, as Robertson (*History of Charles the Fifth*) says, the "veneration" once felt "for their sacred character" became "almost totally extinct." A most signal indication of this was the storm and sack of the City of Rome by the army of the Duke of Bourbon—a Roman Catholic prince, sent upon that strange enterprise by the Roman Catholic emperor Charles, the very pillar and support of popery in Europe—in which such horrors were enacted by a Roman Catholic soldiery, at the very centre of Roman Christendom, as history can scarcely anywhere parallel. Alike the Inquisition and the Order of the Jesuits were expedients resorted to by the hierarchy to save themselves from the destruction that threatened; yet while these may have availed at first, ultimate reaction against them, on the part of rulers and peoples, proved that the damage they wrought through the ferocity of the one and the unprincipled methods and practices of the other, was far greater than the help they gave in the earlier times of their history. The rapid spread of Reformation principles, even at the outset, was amazing, In forty-eight years after Luther, in 1517, nailed his thesis to the Wittenberg church-door, that is, in 1565, a

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial [a] upon the great river Euphrates; [b] and the water thereof was dried up, [c] that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.
13 And I saw three unclean [d] spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of [e] the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of [f] the false prophet.

12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the *river* Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for
13 the kings that *come* from the sunrising. And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs:

[a] ch. 9: 14....[b] See Jer. 50: 38; 51: 36....[c] Isa. 41: 2, 25....[d] 1 John 4: 1, 2, 3....[e] ch. 12: 3, 9....[f] ch. 19: 20; 20: 10.

Venetian ambassador, writing home to his government, was obliged to confess, "There remain firm to the pope only Spain and Italy, with some few islands, and those countries possessed by Your Serenity in Dalmatia and Greece"; while the papal rule in even Spain and Italy, as we have seen, often tottered. Taking the papal history of the last three or four centuries as a whole, one sees in it the record, not of growth, but of decline. The efforts made to regain the lost supremacy have, in every instance, wrought ultimate damage. As always happens to a decaying power, each effort at self-resuscitation has re-acted in still deeper decline; while the consciousness of this has made the triple crown a crown of thorns to its wearer, and has often smitten the hierarchy itself with dismay. As we now write, what were once styled "the thunders of the Vatican," have sunk into peevish complaints. Of those Italian States where the pope was once owned as a temporal ruler, and where he showed how utterly bad a government of priests might be made, not a rood is left to him. Surrendering none of his claims to both spiritual and temporal supremacy, he finds these claims repelled in tones that penetrate even the privacy of Vatican seclusion; and while vaunting himself king of kings, finds left to him of the old-time supremacy not even a name. The vial has been poured out upon the throne of the beast.

12-16. The Sixth Vial.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates. "*Upon the river, the great Euphrates.*" In our exposition of the sounding of the sixth trumpet (ch. 9: 13, 14, *et. seq.*), we have noticed the symbolism implied in the mention of "the river Euphrates." That river, in ancient times, separated the barbarous and hostile heathen nations of the far East from the territory and people of Israel. It was the boundary line between that which represented, on the one side, the true religion and the true civilization, and that which represented, on the other, heathenism and barbarism. The former symbolizes, in the vision here studied, the kingdom of God among men; the latter, all which opposes that kingdom and seeks its overthrow. As the drying up of the Euphrates, in ancient times, would have afforded easy passage for armies of heathen enemies to come against Israel; so here, we trace an Apocalyptic foreshadowing of events in which hindrances to this inroad of evil shall be taken away.—**And the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east** [*the sun-rising*] **might be prepared.** Some have taken this as indicative of events auspicious in character, like the conversion of the Jews to Christianity (Herder)—an interpretation plainly impossible, since in no sense could such an event be exhibited under the figure of kings of the east coming from beyond the Euphrates, as is here so plainly implied; or as the conversion of Constantine (Grotius), or that of believing princes in the time of the Reformation (Bullinger and others). The events foreshadowed are, clearly, not of this nature. The vials are all judgment-vials; vials of "the wrath of God." The events occurring under them are visitations of that wrath. The connection here, also, implies this. What appears in the verses immediately following must be kept in close association with this now in hand. By "the kings of the east" must be meant powers and forces having a like relation with the spiritual kingdom of God, to that which the heathenism of the far East sustained to the kingdom of Israel. They are hostile powers, here termed "kings," as symbolizing the haughty spirit in which they assert their claim to sovereignty in the thought, and faith, and life of the world.

13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. This is the pivotal verse in the whole passage. By "the false prophet" is

14 a For they are the spirits of devils, b working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth c and of the whole world, to gather them to d the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
15 e Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, f lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
16 g And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; that go forth [1]unto the kings of the whole [2]world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day
15 of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his gar-
16 ments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into a place which is called in Hebrew [3]Har-Magedon.

a 1 Tim. 4:1; James 3:15....b 2 Thess. 2:9; ch. 13:13, 14; 19:20....c Luke 2:1....d ch. 17:14; 19:19; 20:8....e Matt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; ch. 3:3....f 2 Cor. 5:3; ch. 3:4, 18....g ch. 19:19.——1 Or, *upon*....2 Gr. *inhabited earth*....3 Or, *Ar-Magedon*.

meant the second beast. In ch. 13:14, it is said of him that he "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the [*first*] beast." To "deceive" by "all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish," (2 Thess. 2:9), is peculiarly the work of the false prophet. And such as this is the second wild beast, Antichrist, in its development as a corrupt, oppressive, and persecuting ecclesiasticism. The coming forth of these "three unclean spirits" points to a peculiar and formidable combination of what is worst and most to be dreaded in the world against all that is good. They represent three great forces — the *Satanic*, denoted by the dragon; the *worldly*, in its most dreaded aspect, as represented by those world-powers which were most rapacious and deadly; and the *deluding*, whether seen in the false Christianity which has deceived such myriads of human souls, or the more openly antichristian manifestations which grow out of it in the various forms of fanaticism, or in those of unbelief. These spirits are "like frogs." They are unclean; the clamorous croaking of those inhabitants of pools and marshes is no unworthy symbol of the discordances with which the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet fill the world.

14. For they are the spirits of devils [*demons*], **working miracles** [*signs*]. Their true nature is thus indicated. As we see them in history they are human; in reality—in respect of those spiritual forces of which what is human is but the instrument—they are demons.—**Which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world.** The rendering of the revision is much to be preferred, while it conforms to the best Greek text. "Kings of the earth and of the whole world," seems like tautology. We should also read, as in the margin of the revision, "go forth upon." These demonic influences take possession of the world's reigning forces, and thus engage them on the side of evil, in its war against the good.—**To gather them to the battle** [*the war*] **of that great day of God Almighty.** "The great day of *God the Almighty*," is better. The word in the Greek (πόλεμον), it is important to notice, means, not "battle," but "war." It is not any single struggle of opposing forces that is meant, but a protracted one, involving many "battles," and lasting, possibly, through generations, or even centuries. The passage, therefore, does not describe any single "battle of Armageddon," such as interpreters have often imagined. It points, rather, to great historical conflicts between truth, righteousness, and redemption, on one side, and the combined array of falsehood, iniquity, and perdition, on the other—the prize of the victor being the world and man.

15. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. This verse is parenthetical. It is of the same nature as the warnings occurring from time to time in other parts of the book, as in the Epistles to the Seven Churches, and very often in other books of the New Testament. John seems here to speak as personating the Lord Jesus. The "coming as a thief" cannot be definitely interpreted, however, of the Lord's second coming. In this connection, the force of the admonition is that in a time when the powers of evil are thus abroad, it will well become the Lord's people to "watch," to "keep" themselves from all defilement, and to have the eye ever directed to him who sees and knows all, and will in his own times and ways appear, alike to vindicate and to judge.

16. And he [*they*] **gathered them together unto a place called in the Hebrew**

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, [a] It is done.

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple,

a ch. 21 : 6.

tongue Armageddon. The form of this name given in the revision is helpful to the right interpretation of its figurative significance. "Har" is "*mountain.*" Har-Magedon is, therefore, *the mountain Magedon*, or *Megiddo.* "The mountain, in Palestine, designates," as Alford says, "the neighborhood where the Canaanitish kings were overthrown by Barak (Judges 5 : 19); an occasion which gave rise to one of the triumphal songs recorded in the Old Testament." Here, also, was fought the battle between King Josiah and Pharaoh-Necho, of Egypt; likewise a battle between the Kings of Israel and Judah, when Ahaziah was slain by Jehu. It is "a high table-land surrounded by hills" (Carpenter), and "was the great battle-field of the Holy Land." The mountain is in sight from the spot where John was born, and where his youth was spent. "To the fisherman of the Lake of Galilee," Alford says, "who would know Megiddo as he saw its background of highland lit up by the morning or evening sun across the plain from his native hills, the name would, doubtless, be a familiar one." It seems to appear, now, in the scenery of the vision, as a symbol of the great impending "war" between the array brought forward by the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, and the "called, and chosen, and faithful," who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The subject, "they" of the verb, evidently means the three unclean spirits, (v. 14).

17-21. THE SEVENTH VIAL.

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into [*upon*] **the air.** In a commentary upon this book by Thomas Brightman, bearing date A. D. 1615, we find the following note upon these words: "The event of this vial [the seventh], shall be common, as which is poured upon the *aire*, which compasseth the land and sea round about, which aire yet is not the elementary *aire*, that we breath in; but some other thing that is signified by this name, as was usual in the other seals. Now we know that the *devill* is called in Scripture 'the prince that hath power over the aire (Eph. 2 : 2). . . Seeing therefore the *aire* belongeth to his jurisdiction, this last vial shall bring a most grievous Calamity unto *the whole kingdom of the devill.* The former vials did plague some members thereof, severally; this shall destroy the whole body of the wicked with a common destruction." This old writer seems, here, in his quaint fashion, to present correctly the significance of the imagery employed in the passage next to be considered. The view so given seems preferable to that of Lange, who thinks "the air" symbolizes "the common life-sphere of men. The anger-vial in the air, is, therefore," he says, . . . "a deadly decomposition of the spiritual life-sphere of men, resulting in the falling asunder of great communities" . . . . also, "the cosmical decomposition of the earthly life-sphere—the end of the world." This seems to us a straining of the sense beyond what it will properly bear. In the symbolism of "the air," considered with reference to that of "the earth," "the sea," etc., there appears to be an allusion, first, to that atmospheric environment which embraces all earthly things, and secondly to the air itself as the element which carries in its bosom the forces which are capable of such destructiveness. The "voices, and thunders, and lightnings," of which we read in the next verse, the terrific storm of hail of which mention is made in the last verse of the chapter, are atmospheric phenomena; while the "earthquake" occurring at the same time, is but the response of the more solid globe to the awful war of elements in the air that environs it. The whole picture exhibits to us an elemental cataclysm of the most terrific kind, such as may fitly image forth the utter and final downfall of the kingdom of evil. **And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven.** The revised version here follows the text of Westcott and Hort, and translates, "a great voice out of the temple, from the throne." This is the reading of the Alexandrine manuscript; the Sinaitic reads, "a voice out of the temple of God." Westcott and Hort, with the revisers, evidently prefer the Alexandrine text. The point is not material, as the sense is not af-

18 And [a]there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; [b]and there was a great earthquake, [c]such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.
19 And [d]the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon [e]came in remembrance before God, [f]to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

18 from the throne, saying, It is done: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since [1]there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so
19 mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness

[a] ch. 4: 5; 8: 5; 11: 19....[b] ch. 11: 13....[c] Dan. 12: 1....[d] ch. 14: 8; 17: 18....[e] ch. 18: 5....[f] Isa. 51: 17, 22; Jer. 25: 15, 16; ch. 14: 10.—1 Some ancient authorities read, *there was a man.*

fected in either case, in any important way, save that the words "from the throne," make it more clear that the voice itself is *divine.* The weight of authority seems to favor this reading. The voice is that which, in the beginning of the chapter, gives to the angels their commission—the voice of God himself. **—Saying, It is done.** It is not sufficient to say, with Düsterdieck, that the words, "It is done," simply announce the fulfillment of what had been commanded, when the seven angels were sent forth to "pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." What follows, in subsequent verses, plainly shows that the words have, in fact, an import far more solemn and fearful. They announce *the end*—the accomplishment of that which God had purposed and decreed—the final visitation "of the wrath of God." It does not follow that they indicate the end of the world. This may be implied; but the distinct and explicit announcement is, that the kingdom of evil, the reign and warfare alike, of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, have reached their final close, so that the ruin now coming upon them will be final and forever. It is the "finishing" of "the mystery of God."

18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings. The order of the words is different from that in the revised Greek text—"lightnings, and voices, and thunders." Here, again, we find a notable likeness to what was seen under a former vision. In connection with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, there were "lightnings, and voices, and thunders"; also the "earthquake," of which mention is made in the connection here; and "great hail," corresponding to what is likewise here more definitely described. We have not, in our exposition of this chapter, treated the vials as synchronous with the trumpets, notwithstanding the remarkable likenesses between the two visions which from time to time have been pointed out. These likenesses are due to the fact that like imagery is employed to indicate like events. In each instance, however, while the general aspect of what transpires is similar in the one case to what appears in the other, the *effect* seen under the vials is vastly more complete and final than under the trumpets. So in this present case, as will appear.—**And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.** The order of the words in the revision is more exactly according to the Greek. Tischendorf has in his text the singular number—"since a man was upon the earth." We have before explained the symbolism of the earthquake as denoting great revolutions, such as shake down systems and shatter great powers and combinations. Such an one occurred at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when at the resurrection of the witnesses the kingdom of Antichrist received a shock, under which a tenth part of the city—the great antichristian system—fell. The earthquake here described is *like* that one, but vastly more overwhelming. *That* denoted the *weakening* and crippling of powers nostile to God and to his kingdom; this denotes their *destruction.* There have been many such in history; but never one so great, so mighty, as this. The *Speaker's Commentary* also calls attention to the fact that "in the case of this earthquake there is no repentance, such as followed that in ch. 11: 13."

19. And the great city was divided into three parts. By the "city" in this and similar connections is meant concentrated and organized force hostile to God; in "the great city" the symbolism is emphasized—it is the combination of all these forces—Antichrist in the completeness of final development. The *Speaker's Commentary* says: "The signification of this verse seems to be that, understood in the most general manner, 'the great city' is the centre of the world-power, where 'the throne of the beast' (ver. 10)

20 And [a]every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
21 [b]And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and [c]men blasphemed God because of [d]the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

20 of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the 21 mountains were not found. And great hail, *every stone* about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

a ch. 6: 14....b ch. 11: 19....c ver. 9: 11....d See Ex. 9: 23, 24, 25.

is always to be found, whatever the forms of evil may be under which that power is exhibited—whether unbelief, or superstition, or sensuality." In the eighteenth chapter, as well as in subsequent parts of the same verse, this city appears as Babylon; and the overthrow here briefly spoken of as its falling asunder in three parts is in that chapter vividly exhibited in detail. The qualifying word "great," as also in the phrase, "Babylon the Great," alludes to the fact that what ancient Babylon was comparatively in miniature, this other Babylon is upon a vast scale. There was no lack of formidableness in the prototype; in this more modern reproduction, however, the breadth, and fury, and effect of the power exercised are such as to almost dwarf that of old in the comparison. This great city is now by the mighty earthquake shaken to the ground. It "was divided into three parts," shattered and overthrown. We should note that it is not said, as in former instances, that "a third part" of the city was shaken. The whole city was rent asunder by the earthquake, each "third part" being visited with overthrow. "The three evil spirits," says Carpenter, "endeavored to unite all powers in one grand assault; but there is no natural cohesion among those whose only bond is hatred of the good. The first convulsion shakes them to pieces."—**And the cities of the nations fell.** The destruction of "the great city," like the effects following upon the pouring out of the fifth vial upon the throne of the beast, indicates a visitation upon the antichristian power at its centre, as when the capital of a great empire is taken and destroyed. As in such a case, subordinate powers, dependent on that, share its fate, so here. While at its centre the rule of Antichrist is thus laid prostrate, the effect spreads to every subordinate centre; the ruin reaches widely as the empire of evil itself. The vivid, impressive picture shows us the capital of this empire, and every subordinate or confederate capital throughout the world, visited by the same earthquake shock, and all, in the same moment, tumbling in ruins. In this way is Apocalyptically set forth the final doom of all ungodliness, and all spiritual wickedness, alike in high places and in low.—**And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.** These words summarize what has gone before, and anticipate, in like summary, the more detailed description in the two following chapters.

20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. At the opening of the sixth seal, among other portents, the seer beholds "every mountain and island moved out of their places." Here we must take the language used, not literally, as denoting actual physical occurrences, but figuratively, in a symbolism *resting on* the literal and physical. In the vision under the sixth seal, a great world-cataclysm is revealed. All things seem rushing to destruction, as men naturally imagine them to be when vast revolutions—falling empires, prostrated thrones, mighty forces brought in collision and working mutual overthrow—are taking place. It is so, again, here. In the scenery of the vision the mountains and the islands 'flee away" and "are not found." "The islands, like the mountains," says Hengstenberg, "denote kingdoms. The difference is merely this, that in the designation of kingdoms by islands, respect is had only to their separate existence, while they are called mountains, in so far as they exercise dominion over others."

21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent. The change in the order of the words, in the revised version, will be noticed. Hail-stones frequently appear in Scripture imagery as tokens of divine visitation. Examples are Isa. 30: 30; Ezek. 13: 11; besides parallel passages in our present book. "About the size of a talent" lends vividness to the imagery. [The weight of a talent was, in round numbers, about fifty pounds. Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*) v. 6. 3), says that the soldiers of the tenth legion had engines (catapults) which threw stones larger

than the rest, adding: "Now, the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and further. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space." Whiston's Translation.—A. H.] By the "hail" must be meant calamities of various sorts, "tribulations," such as our Lord spoke of in Matt. 24: 21, as characterizing the last days. As an historical parallel or illustration, we may refer to Josh. 10: 1-11, where it is told how the Lord cast down great stones from heaven, upon the enemies of Israel.—**And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was** [*is*] **exceeding great.** "Blasphemed," not repented. "The proud, hard spirit," is the comment of Carpenter in Ellicott, "which still hates the good, remains. Thus, sin is its own worst penalty. As an illustration of this hard, unsubdued spirit, we may call to mind Capaneus in Dante's *Inferno*, and the words in which Virgil addresses him:

> 'Thou art more punished, in that this thy pride
> Lives yet unquenched; no torment save thy rage
> Were to thy fury pain proportioned full.'"

EXCURSUS D.—THE BATTLE (WAR) OF ARMAGEDDON.

A single word in one part of the passage here studied (v. 14), suggests how mistaken is the view that by "the *battle* of Armageddon" is meant *one* great and decisive struggle between the powers so often seen in array against each other in the course of this book. The word, in the Greek (πόλεμον), as noted above, means "war." It is not "battle" (μάχην). This corrected rendering, also, will help toward a more clear and accurate view of what is meant by "the *war* of Armageddon" itself.

Instances are frequent, in this book, of the use of cities, such as Babylon; rivers, as the Euphrates; and localities, as in the present case, to symbolize great spiritual forces or facts. Armageddon is used in the same way as Jerusalem, or "the holy city," Euphrates and Babylon. It does not mean a locality, in any literal sense, whether the same as that mentioned in the sacred history, or some other figuratively called by its name. It is *the name* of a locality used to make more specific, vivid, and real, the Apocalyptic scenery amidst which the great spiritual events and effects foreshadowed are represented as taking place. Let us note the evident historical basis of the imagery, as so employed.

Gesenius hypothetically gives the meaning of the name "Megiddo" as "place of troops." The form "Magiddon" (*Mageddo*) is the Greek, as used by the Septuagint, for Megiddo. The first syllable of the name "Armageddon," according to the Hebrew spelling, may mean either "city," or "mountain." Schaff prefers the former; other writers, as Alford, the latter. Schaff describes it as "a city of Manasseh, situated within the borders of Issachar, and formerly a royal city of the Canaanites, whose king and its neighboring towns were conquered by Joshua. . . . The neighboring stream, probably the 'waters of Megiddo,' is the largest perennial tribute of the Kishon. The valley, or plain, of Megiddo, also called Megiddon, was part of the plain of Esdraelon." This plain, Dean Stanley ("*Sinai and Palestine*," ch. ix), terms "the battle-field of Jewish history and the chief scene of our Lord's ministrations. Bounded as it is," he adds, "by the hills of Palestine on both north and south, it would naturally become the arena of war between the lowlanders who trusted in their chariots, and the Israelite highlanders of the neighboring heights. To this cause mainly it owes its celebrity, as the battle-field of the world, which has, through its adoption into the language of the Apocalypse, passed into a universal proverb." Another writer (Clarke) quoted in the *Speaker's Commentary*, says of the plain of Esdraelon that it "has been a chosen place of encampment in every contest carried on in Palestine from the days of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Assyria, unto the disastrous march of Napoleon Bonaparte from Egypt into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Christian Crusaders, and antichristian Frenchmen, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, and Arabs, warriors of every nation that is under heaven, have pitched their tents on the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the banners of their nations wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon."

Signalized in history in the way here indicated, the significance of this locality, as used in the symbolism of our book, is sufficiently

CHAPTER XVII.

AND there came [a] one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; [b] I will shew unto thee the judgment of [c] the great whore [d] that sitteth upon many waters:

1 AND there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the judgment of the great

[a] ch. 21:9....[b] ch. 16:19; 18:16, 17, 19....[c] Nah. 3:4; ch. 19:2....[d] Jer. 51:13; ver. 15.

clear. Two things in what Stanley says of it may be specially noted: that this valley, or plain, is appropriately named as "*the battle-field of the world*," and also that this part of Palestine was "*the chief scene of our Lord's ministrations.*" These two features may be treated as prominent in the passage above studied. The unclean spirits out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, go forth to gather the nations to war in that which is the world's battle-field, and where also our Lord has taught and worked miracles. In other words, the scene of this war is the world itself, and distinctively the *Christian* world. What has therefore been termed "the battle of Armageddon" is that final and climacteric, and perhaps long-continued struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil which is to characterize the last days. It is not any brief "battle," sudden in onset and soon decided. It is a "war," with Christendom as the field, in which the forces on either side will be arrayed with a consciousness that the struggle is final, and in which there may be many campaigns and many vicissitudes ere the final issue comes.

It should be noted by what means the forces of evil are brought together for this "war of Armageddon." Unclean spirits, the progeny of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, Satanic, worldly, spiritually deluding, will be the instruments at work, the recruiting agents of evil for this war. We have here indications of a most formidable combination. It may be presumed that alliances will be seen, that ought to appear impossible, in the nature of things. Unbelief may league with superstition, license with despotism, the church-hating world with the apostate church, knowledge with ignorance, science in its most magnificent pretension with the stupidity that holds all science in contempt—the dragon-spirit, the beast-spirit, and the falsehood-spirit effect alliances amongst these, and uniting them in a common hatred of Christianity and Christ, of God, and the truth, and the people of God, "gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty."

How far indications of such things as we here describe are seen in aspects of the present time, we leave with the observant and thoughtful reader to decide. It is probable that as yet only beginnings of it all are apparent. Enough is evident, however, to give great emphasis and force to the words of warning spoken in immediate connection with those which announce the impending struggle: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth [is wakeful], and keepeth [preserveth] his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

MYSTICAL BABYLON.

1-2. THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST.

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me. What is now to be described should, it would appear, be regarded as occurring under the seventh vial. It is told in ver. 19 of the last chapter how, among other incidents connected with the pouring out of that vial, "Babylon the Great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." This judgment of Babylon is now more fully set forth; and as preliminary to it, a vision is introduced in which Babylon itself appears in its mystical character. There may be a reason for what Alford claims, that the angel who calls the seer's attention to what now appears, and explains its significance, is the angel of the seventh vial. That seems natural and probable, although there is nothing to make it certain. **—Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.** Alford, Lange, Carpenter, and the *Speaker's Commentary*, translate "hither," omitting the "come." "The reference," says Lange, "is not to a local motion, but to a certain direction of the contem-

2 [a]With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and [b]the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

2 harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken

[a] ch. 18: 3....[b] Jer. 51: 7; ch. 14: 8; 16: 3.

plation in accordance with the guidance of the angel." In a sense this may be true. In ver. 3, below, we read, "He carried me away *in the spirit* into the wilderness." There was no actual, bodily change of place, but in changes of the vision, John saw before him a wilderness, with the objects described as there, so that he seems to himself to have been transported thither. The more full discussion of the question of identity, as regards the sinister figure now to be introduced, belongs perhaps, more properly, in connection with subsequent verses of the chapter. It is not a question altogether easy of solution. Many commentators, as Auberlen, Alford, Lange, understand by the woman the church, in its condition of spiritual apostasy. Lange connects what is seen here with what is described in chap. 12, where "we behold a celestial woman, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, adorned with a garland of chosen stars, equipped with eagle's wings." This same woman he seems now to find changed to "a harlot, riding or sitting upon a scarlet beast, . . . and thus herself founded upon an antichristian world-power and bloody violence." One naturally hesitates to adopt this view. "It is hard to understand," says the *Speaker's Commentary*, "how such a statement can be made in the face of the Lord's promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' —especially hard is it, if we remember how the church is described when she appears again after chapter twelve, as the 'Bride,' as 'the New Jerusalem' (ch. 19: 7, 8; 21: 2, 9, 10; 22: 17; cf. John 3: 29)." The mind revolts at the idea of such a glorious being, as the woman that appears in chapter twelve, changed to a "mother of abominations" in chapter seventeen, and again in chapter nineteen, become the bride of the Lord, arrayed "in fine linen, bright and pure." Nor does the difficulty seem to be evaded by adopting, with Wordsworth, the idea of "*a* faithless church." It may well be doubted if there can be such a thing as a faithless church. There may be what shall *call itself* a church, yet in which there shall be found scarcely a remnant of what is properly the character of a true church. Indeed, the phrase itself, "a true church," might be said to imply a pleonasm. There can surely be no such thing as a *false* church, in any proper sense of the phrase; for the very fact of its falseness proves that it is no church of Christ at all. Such phrases may be conventionally employed as matters of convenience. But when, as in the exposition of our present passage, we come to an interpretation of sacred symbols, under which are presented to us, on the one side, what is befitting in a divine institution beloved of its Founder, and, upon the other, the combination of all that is most sinister, odious, and pernicious, we surely must discard conventional phrases, and call things by their right names. We decline, therefore, to see in this woman on the scarlet beast the Mother of the Man-child. It may, however, be intended in this vision to suggest how, by the harlot, that character is *assumed;* as, in fact, the antichristian power, in its spiritual form, has ever claimed for itself, not only the character of a church of Christ, but an exclusive possession of this character. It should be observed that nowhere in the interpretation of the vision given in this chapter by the angel, is there any sign that this assumed character is allowed. The closing verse of the chapter says: "The woman which thou sawest is *that great city*, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." The same is implied in the verse now before us, where it is said of the harlot that she "sitteth upon many waters." Almost the same words are, in Jeremiah 51: 13, applied to Babylon: "O thou that dwellest upon many waters." These waters are said, in ver. 15 of our chapter, to be "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Of the significance of these descriptive clauses we shall have more to say in the proper place. For the present, we simply suggest the impossibility of viewing the woman in this chapter as in any sense either *the* church of Christ, or *a* church of Christ, but as an impure and hateful power, assuming the name and seeking to impose itself upon the world as alone entitled to recognition as that church which is to God "as the apple of his eye."

2. With whom the kings of the earth

3 So he carried me away in the spirit [a]into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit [b]upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of [c]names of blasphemy, [d]having seven heads and [e]ten horns.

3 with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, [1]full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads

a ch. 12: 6, 14....*b* ch. 12: 3....*c* ch. 13: 1....*d* ver. 9....*e* ver. 12.—1 Or, *names full of blasphemy.*

have committed fornication. It is thus indicated how between this pretender to the character and prerogatives of the church, and "the kings of the earth"—the ruling political forces, whether monarchical or other—a peculiar confederacy exists, involving criminality of the sort represented so often under the symbol of "fornication." Upon the one hand is here implied the seductiveness and craft of the woman; upon the other, that "the kings of the earth" are fully caught in the snare and drawn by her into a confederacy with her in the criminality charged. The word here used is the one most in keeping with the imagery employed—that of an intriguing, abandoned woman, with her debauched retinue. Only, in this case, it is "the kings of the earth" who are thus corrupted, and who lend themselves as ministers of her will. In the crime charged there seems an allusion to the Old Testament mode of representation for that sin of idolatry into which Israel so often fell. Here, however, it implies simply what is false in religion and worship, and indicates that the confederacy between the woman and those whom she so easily sways is in behalf of such a religion. It is, in one sense, an apostate church, fallen into idolatry; while in another, it is a spurious ecclesiasticism, pretending to all that is most genuine in a church of Christ, yet a pretender, merely, and engaging the ruling powers of the world in support of practices as false and as forbidden as when Israel fell into the practices of the heathen nations around them.—**And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.** Not simply the ruling powers of the world are seduced by these harlot sorceries, but "they that dwell in the earth"—as the revised version translates—the masses of the people no less. They are drunken; the idolatries into which they fall become a fanaticism; they are carried away as by a delirium of intoxication. In this way the words of the angel prepare the seer for that which is soon to be disclosed on the Apocalyptic scene, with such measure of explanation as consists with the Apocalyptic character of the whole.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the [*a*] wilderness. The question here arises, whether we shall translate, after both the common version and the revision, "in the Spirit"—meaning the Holy Spirit of God—or "in spirit," meaning that of John himself; denoting, as Lange expresses it, simply "a change effected in the ecstatic direction of the seer." A like expression has occurred, and been noticed in our exposition, at ch. 1: 10, "I was in the Spirit" (*ἐν πνεύματι*), which we decided to render with the article, notwithstanding the absence of the article in the Greek, consistently with what we found to be a New Testament usage. The words here, in the Greek, are the same as in the former place, though the connection is different. At ch. 1: 10, an account is given of that peculiar condition into which the seer is brought, and which makes all that follows in the visions of the book possible to him. In 21: 10, and in the verse now studied, we are simply informed, in this way, that John becomes conscious of a new scene as passing before him, with new figures and incidents represented. Lange and Carpenter prefer, apparently for this reason, to translate, simply, "in spirit." Alford and others render, as is done in the revision, "in the Spirit." Even if the latter be preferred, it seems clear that the emphasis is not now, as in 1: 10, upon the fact that the mysterious and sacred influence felt comes from the divine Spirit, but that now, the movement in John himself, so caused, takes a new "direction." If with the word "wilderness" the definite article were used, the perhaps necessary inference would be that this is *the* wilderness mentioned in chapter twelve, and into which the woman with the Man-child is borne on her eagle's wings. Even as it is, we may assume the general reference to be the same. The scene upon which the woman in this present chapter appears, is that of the disordered national and moral condition amidst which the Papacy arose, and which supplied to it the opportunity it used to such evil purpose.—**And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast.** We have here, again, the

4 And the woman [a]was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, [b]and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, [c]having a golden cup in her hand [d]full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

4 and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and [1]decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, [2]even the unclean

a ch. 18: 12, 16....b Dan. 11: 38....c Jer. 51: 7; ch. 18: 6....d ch. 14: 8.—1 Gr. *gilded*....2 Or, *and of the unclean things*.

word (θηρίον) used in former instances. The scarlet color may be meant to intensify our conception of the bloody and cruel nature of the beast; possibly, also, it may represent sovereignty in that world-power which the beast symbolizes.—**Full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.** The beast is thus identified as the one described in chapter thirteen. We there, in our exposition, understand the sinister appearance so indicated, as symbolizing Antichrist in his manifestation as a world-power, imperial or other. He is represented in our present passage as "full of names of blasphemy." In the former case he is described as bearing "upon his *heads* names of blasphemy." Both alike make allusion to those assumptions of *divine* prerogative, or other usurpations, either impious or tyrannical, or both, seen in all antichristian world-powers. "There is no form of irreligion," says Lange, "which is not comprehended in the absolute Machiavelism of world-monarchy; religious persecution, contempt of humanity, despotism over consciences, breach of promise, a doctrinal system of faithlessness—and the like—are some of the first articles." Alford's comment is: "The names of blasphemy, which were found before on the heads of the beast, have now spread over its whole surface ['*full* of names of blasphemy']. As ridden and guided by the harlot it is tenfold more blasphemous in its titles and assumptions than before. The heathen world had but its Divi in the Cæsars, as in other deified men of note; but Christendom has its 'most Christian' and 'most faithful' kings, such as Louis XIV. and Philip II.; its 'Defenders of the Faith,' such as Charles II. and James II.; its society of unprincipled intriguers called after the name of our Lord, and working Satan's work, '*ad majorem Dei gloriam*'; its holy office of the Inquisition, with its dens of darkest cruelty; finally its 'patrimony of St. Peter,' and its 'holy Roman Empire'; all of them, and many more, new names of blasphemy with which the woman has invested the beast. Go where we will, and look where we will, in Papal Christendom, names of blasphemy meet us. The taverns, the shops, the titles of men and of places, the very insurance badges on the houses, are full of them."

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. The description is of an abandoned woman, enriched with meretricious spoil, and arrayed in that deceitful splendor in which vanity delights, and under which vice often seeks to hide its shame. There is something striking, and at the same time suggestive in the contrast between the gaudy magnificence of the woman, and the desolate and savage aspect of the wilderness where she appears. The latter represents, most fitly, the spiritual and moral desolation amidst which the Roman Babylon so long bore rule. In the purple and scarlet color of her array, as in that of the beast, there is, perhaps, a suggestion of pretension to sovereignty. The "gold and precious stones and pearls," are the trappings in which usurped sovereignty has ever delighted, and by means of which it has ever sought to hide its own essential poverty in all that could really entitle it to the homage it claimed; they also, when viewed as symbolisms of the antichristian apostasy, remind us of the shows and splendors in which the Roman Church, so-called, has made itself so magnificent, and so unlike the true Bride of the Lord.—**Having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.** There is a notable similarity, here, to the description of Babylon in Jeremiah 51: 7: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that hath made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." By the "abomination and filthiness" ("unclean things") mentioned, must be understood those enormities which history discloses as belonging to the character and career of mystical Babylon, the so-called "Church" of Rome, more especially its idolatries, its false teaching, and the vices which make it in history a spectacle so disgusting.

5 And upon her forehead *was* a name written,
a MYSTERY, BABYLON b THE GREAT, c THE
MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF
THE EARTH.
6 And I saw d the woman drunken e with the blood
of the saints, and with the blood of f the martys of
Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great
admiration.
7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou

5 things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a
name written, [1] MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE
MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINA-
6 TIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman
drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the
blood of the [2] martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw
7 her, I wondered with a great wonder. And the
angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder?
I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of

a 2 Thess. 2:7....*b* ch. 11:8; 14:8; 16:19; 18:2, 10, 21....*c* ch. 18:9; 19:2....*d* ch. 18:24....*e* ch. 13:15; 16:6....*f* ch. 6:9, 10; 12:11.—1 Or, *a mystery, BABYLON THE GREAT*....2 Or, *witnesses*.

5. And upon her forehead was a name written. As was customary with harlots in ancient times.—**Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.** Whether to take the word "mystery," as a part of the name, or simply as a kind of preliminary announcement that the name itself is symbolical and mystical, does not seem quite clear; probably the latter is the more correct view. What follows in the name rests upon the fact that a great and wicked city is a centre of evil influence and vicious contagion; a "mother of abominations." Not only are its fashions and social customs copied in all dependent cities, and even among the rural populations; but its vices are emulated, and what is worst in its example, eagerly reproduced. Upon this general fact, amply illustrated by special cases in ancient as well as modern times, the symbolism here is made to rest. Like such a city—like the most conspicuous example of such, "Babylon the Great"—is this evil power; this Scarlet Woman, impudently assuming the character of the "Celestial Woman" whom the dragon persecuted, yet in reality the Mother of Harlots. The symbol is perfect as applied to the papal Babylon. In the personal vileness of so many of her popes; in the immoralities of her hierarchy, fostered by institutions like that of celibacy in the priesthood, and in the policy which she never hesitated to avow, and which by example and precept alike she encouraged and inspired; in her heartlessness, her ambition—in short the combination, so utterly unexampled, of what is worst in mean hypocrisy, and open iniquity—the Church of Rome, during centuries, was a centre from which demoralization and iniquity spread in all directions, reaching alike to high places and low. The characterization implied in the symbol is perfect.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. The two designating words, "saints" and "martyrs," must indicate the same persons, only implying that while saints they suffered as martyrs, and martyrs of Jesus, laying down their lives in fidelity to him and to his cause. It is among these saints and martyrs that we ought to look for the church, not the persecuting power, which in its greedy and cruel thirst, made itself drunken with their blood.—**And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.** "*With a great wonder*," is better. Many reasons have been given for the "wonder" here expressed, as: Because so powerful a beast carries a woman (Bengel); Because the Roman power remains still unbroken after Christ has come (Hengstenberg); Because a change so extraordinary has passed over the woman (Auberlen and Alford); Not because heathen Rome persecuted the saints, but because a Christian church, calling herself "the Mother of Christendom," *i. e.*, the Church of Rome, should be "drunken with the blood of the saints" (Wordsworth); Because John did not understand the symbolism (Züllig and De Wette). The comment of Carpenter in Ellicott is: "The wonder probably rose from the strange alliance of the woman with the wild beast. It was not wonderful to see the vision of a wild beast or monster dealing out death and slaughter; but to see a woman allied with the monster and drunken with the blood of the holy, provoked astonishment." In other words, as De Wette and Züllig express it, John "did not understand the symbol," while its extraordinary character made the feeling of surprise and amazement more intense. This more simple and natural way of explaining the matter is justified also by the fact that the angel, having asked him why he wondered, proceeds, as if addressing himself to the feeling thus observed, to explain the meaning of the vision.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the

marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and [a]shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and [b]go into perdition: and they, that dwell on the earth [c]shall wonder, [d]whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, [1] and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, *they* whose name hath not been written [2] in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and [3] shall come.

a ch. 11 : 7; 13 : 1....*b* ch. 13 : 10; ver. 11....*c* ch. 13 : 3....*d* ch. 13 : 8.—1 Some ancient authorities read, *and he goeth*....2 Gr. *on*. ....3 Gr. *shall be present*.

mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. This explanation of the vision is exceptional—being quite unusual in this book—and indicates alike how profound, and at the same time how important, is its significance. And in truth, as we shall see presently, the woman on the scarlet-colored beast presents to view, in its most formidable shape, a combination of all the several forms of hostility which the church, the people, and the cause of God encounter in this world. The dragon gave to the beast his power and great authority, and of this the color of the beast may be a reminder (the great red dragon and the scarlet-colored beast). The woman represents the second beast, alike in her character as such and as the false prophet. The symbolism of the book, in so far as it relates to forms of hostility encountered and overcome by "the kingdom of God and of his Christ," is thus concentrated in the sinister vision now to be explained. In this explanation, too, help is given toward a better comprehension of some parts of what has gone before, especially of those visions where these same inauspicious appearances have already been seen.

8-18. ANGELIC EXPOSITION OF THE VISION.

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. The language employed is remarkable, and it becomes more so as we notice in connection the closing words of this eighth verse, where it is said of the beast that he "was, and is not, and yet is." A like description of him occurs at ver. 11. Such language can only be explained as characterizing some great historical power appearing and re-appearing under various forms, and here spoken of more with reference to its *manifestations* than to its essential being. If we recall the period at which these visions were seen, and some of the events then recent, we shall, perhaps, have a clearer view of the meaning of the enigmatical words in question. On an occasion then not so very far back, and which John himself might easily recall, our Lord's disciples had asked him: "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Had they in fact understood all that was really imported in the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, they might very naturally have supposed that the time for this great event had come. Their Lord himself had said: "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It might easily have seemed as if the coming of Christ, the setting up of his kingdom, and the death-blow given by him to the kingdom of Satan, were something final and conclusive; as if, especially, there was to be no more in this world the uprising and growth of such hostile forces as in the past had opposed themselves to God's cause and God's people, and had made themselves so formidable; as if the world-power itself, that evil energy which had re-appeared under successive forms in Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, were now to be subdued under the auspicious dominion of him who, as "Prince of the kings of the earth," was to "reign in righteousness." In some sense this was true. This power did receive its death-blow in that which was accomplished in the advent, the ministry, and above all in the death of the Lord. Yet, like everything evil and noxious, it proved to be tenacious of life. The angel could truly say to John, that "it was and is not"; the death of Christ and the setting up of his kingdom in this world, had so changed all the conditions of this warfare of the evil against the good, as that in truth it existed no longer as it had been. Yet the hour of its absolute annihilation had not yet struck. It was to re-appear, ascending "out of the bottomless pit"—that is, with a fresh infusion of the Satanic spirit, more violent and bloody than ever, as if conscious of its

9 And [a]here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. [b]The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.
10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

9 Here is the [1]mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman
10 sitteth: and [2]they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.

a ch. 13: 18....*b* ch. 13: 1.—1 Or, *meaning*....2 Or, *there are.*

own impending doom. So the words were true, as spoken of this dreaded power, that "it was, is not, and yet is"; a noxious principle of life appearing and re-appearing under the form of great political organisms, sometimes apparently crushed, yet breaking out anew, as if freshly emerging from that "bottomless pit" whence it brings all its inspiration, and back to which, in the hour of its "perdition," it must finally go.—**And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.** The revision makes the closing words: "and shall come," according to the corrected Greek reading. "And shall be present" (*παρέσται*), is an alternative rendering which Carpenter adopts. The reading of the Sinaitic manuscript is, "and shall come [or *be present*] again" (*πάλιν παρέσται*). The hostile world-power under its Roman form, had not yet, in John's time, fully revealed itself in its opposition to the spiritual Kingdom of God. An ordeal was before the church more severe and more bitter than any in the past. Of this, the words here spoken were a prophecy. The "wonder" which, it is said in this verse, they shall experience "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world," is not altogether such as John himself experiences. The words look forward to the time when this beast and his rider, seen now in vision, shall become actualities in the uprising and development of combined political and ecclesiastical powers, which shall "wear out the saints of the Most High." The real character of these powers will be no matter of doubt or wonder to those whose names *are* written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. To others the needed "spiritual discernment" will be wanting, and they will fail to see, back of all exterior pomps and pretensions, the real wickedness, or anticipate the doom, of Antichrist. It is as when it is said in ch. 13: 3: "All the world wondered after the beast." The language in which the Lord's true people are here characterized should be noticed. They are the Lord's chosen. Their names were in the book of life from the foundation of the world. "The Lord knoweth," and from eternity has known, "them that are his."

9. And here is the mind that hath wisdom. "And" should be omitted. "It needs," says Carpenter, "true wisdom to behold many incidents of this world's history and not find stumbling-blocks in them."—**The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth.** We must understand an allusion to seven-hilled Rome, but must be careful not to limit the view by the literalism that would confine it there. Mountains themselves are symbols of great political powers. Babylon, in Jeremiah 51: 25, is called a "destroying mountain." When it is said to "the men of Israel," in Isaiah 41: 15, that they shall, with "the threshing instrument" God will give them, "thresh the mountains and beat them small," the symbolism is the same. And again the symbol has a double use, where it is promised and foretold how "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains," implying the supremacy of the Kingdom of God over all kingdoms. Thus, while there is unquestioned allusion to the seven hills on which Rome stood, the imagery reaches beyond these, and takes in those great powers of the older world in which had lived the same spirit that lived anew in the imperial city.

10. And there are seven kings. The corrected reading, here, makes the connection and the meaning much more clear. We should read, as in the revised version, "and they [*the mountains*] are seven kings (*καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτά εἰσιν*). The word "kings" is used, as often, for "kingdom."—**Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.** Carpenter, in Ellicott, prefers to translate, "five fell." For the identification of these five fallen kingdoms, we may refer to

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, [a]and goeth into perdition.
12 And [b]the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into
12 perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast,

[a] ver. 8....[b] Dan. 7: 20; Zech. 1: 18, 19, 21; ch. 13: 1.

the exposition in chapter thirteen. As there suggested, the proper identification of the five seems to find them in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. These had fallen. The sixth, Rome, was then still in existence; the other had not yet come. This last is the seventh head, or mountain, or kingdom. By this seventh head Alford understands "the Christian Empire, beginning with Constantine"; agreeing with Auberlen, who in this Christian Empire sees "Christianity become worldly," and out of this a new form of ordeal for the Kingdom of God arising, taking the form, ultimately, of the Germano-Slavonic "kingdom." Wordsworth understands by the seventh head the imperial power of Germany, rising upon the ruins of that of Italy. We refer again to chapter thirteen, and to the passage there quoted from Carpenter, who, understanding that upon this seventh head the ten horns appear, decides that by this seventh head must be meant that aggregation of monarchies which followed in Europe after the downfall of the Empire—the Germano-Slavonic "kingdom" of Auberlen. These monarchies, as is well known, were supporters and instruments of the Papacy; properly, therefore, in the symbolism here represented as a head of the beast on which the woman sits.—**And when he cometh he must continue a short space.** "He," that is, the power represented by the seventh head with its ten horns. The "short space," or "little while," seems to correspond with the "one hour" of ver. 12.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven. John does not say that this "eighth" is "*one*" "of the seven." In that case, consistently with his uniform usage, he would have written, "one of the seven" (εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτά), using the Greek word for one (εἷς), as in ver. 1 of this chapter, "one of the angels," etc.; also in ch. 5: 5, "one of the elders"; 6: 1, "one of the seven seals"; 7: 13; 15: 7, etc. The same usage appears in other of the writings of John. In Mark 14: 69, a different one appears: "This is one of them (οὗτος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐστιν); the word for "one" (εἷς), being omitted. The same appears in Luke 22: 58; Acts 21: 8; and Col. 4: 9. Hence we see that John's custom is not the same as that of his fellow-evangelists; so that, if he had intended to say that "the eighth" was one of the seven heads in any sort of transformation, he would have inserted the "one" (εἷς). This he does not do. We must, therefore, interpret the words, "one of the seven," in some other way. The preposition "of" (ἐκ) must, it would seem, be taken in its sense of "out of," or "from." Düsterdieck and Lange understand the meaning to be that "the eighth proceeds from the totality of the seven." Carpenter's view is similar. He gives the alternative translation "out of the seven"—"not one of them, but one rising out of them; no eighth empire shall rise, but the wild beast, now smitten in all the seven heads of his power, will, in the convulsive death-throe, seem an eighth power, in which the ebbing life of all the seven finds expression." A time arrives when the seven distinct manifestations of hostile world-power, in the form of great political organisms, mostly imperial, have run their course. *Antichrist*, however, has not yet perished. That deadly principle, making war upon the kingdom of God during all the ages of history, survives, yet not in any distinct form of organic manifestation; in a manifestation, rather, representative of all former ones, in which their spirit, with something of their method, will survive. And this is the final one; for **he goeth into perdition.** It is in this final manifestation that Antichrist meets his doom, destroyed by the breath of the Lord's mouth and consumed by the brightness of his coming. This "eighth," therefore, is not a kingdom. It is a manifestation of Antichrist which comes after the downfall of all the antichristian kingdoms, and is rather a survival of the antichristian principle, violently hostile, as of old, no less deadly in purpose, yet driven to a use of other weapons and to the effecting of new combinations. Of the significance of all this, in the application to present times, we shall have more to say in the General Comments below.

12. And the ten horns which thou saw-

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.
14 [a]These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: [b]for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: [c]and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

13 for one hour. These have one mind, and they give
14 their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they *also shall overcome* that are with

a ch. 16:14; 19:19....b Deut. 10:17; 1 Tim. 6:15; ch. 19:16....c Jer. 50:44, 45; ch. 14:4.

est are ten kings. By "kings," in such a connection as this, kingdoms are meant.—**Which have received no kingdom as yet.** The kingdoms themselves had not yet appeared in history.—**But receive power** [authority, ἐξουσίαν] **as kings one hour with the beast.** The "one hour" is the same in general meaning as the "short space" in ver. 10. It is not to be taken as indicative of a definite period, but only as symbolically setting forth that the kingdoms represented by the ten horns will remain in confederacy with the "beast" for only a comparatively short period.

13. These have one mind, and they shall give [*and they give*] **their power** [δύναμιν] **and strength** [authority, ἐξουσίαν] **unto the beast.** The history in which this prophecy finds its fulfillment is familiar to all who have made themselves conversant with events following the breaking up of the Roman Empire—the sixth head of the beast—and the formation of that "aggregation of monarchies" amongst which, during the middle ages, Europe was divided. There was a period in which, in all these monarchies, the Papacy was supreme, the antichristian principle was dominant. They gave their power and authority to the beast—lent themselves to the support of the antichristian usurpation; prompted to this partly by superstitious reverence for the spiritual authority it claimed, and partly, perhaps chiefly, by political aims and exigencies.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. The mention of "the Lamb" carries us back to chapters fifth and sixth, in which the glorious person of whom John had already written as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" appears as the one worthy to open the sealed book, and to serve, therefore, as the medium of those august revelations. He bears here the same name, although now appearing not as the Suffering, but as the Conquering One.—**For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.** In which fact we have revealed to us, at once, the reason of the victory, and the fatal error of those who had made war upon him.—**And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.** We understand the reference, here, as being to events already several times foreshadowed in previous visions; more especially to what is on record of what must have been to the enemies of a pure and true Christianity a most unexpected outcome of the long struggle between the Antichrist, with the whole power of the world on his side, and the few "called, and chosen, and faithful" ones who stood for the truth. It was, as we have seen in our exposition of chapter eleven, while the dead bodies of the Witnesses lay in the streets of the great, wicked city, and while their enemies were rejoicing and sending presents to each other, that these slain Witnesses arose from the dead and ascended into heaven in the sight of them all; while consternation filled the hearts of the murderers, and a tenth part of the city fell. The almost simultaneous revolt against papal usurpation, corruption, and cruelty in a great part of Europe, at what is termed the Reformation, was extraordinary in itself, and a great surprise to the hierarchy. At the very moment when that tremendous uprising was on the point of occurring, it had been claimed that "the whole body of Christendom" had been brought into subjection, and every voice of even protest silenced. It may be that when he, who, as "Lord of lords and King of kings" won this great victory, is here spoken of as "the Lamb," there is an allusion to the gentle, quiet, and wholly spiritual method of warfare in which the victory itself was won. Never were the words of the apostle more true in their application: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." And the express mention, here, of the "called, and chosen, and faithful," is a recognition by the great Leader of "them that were with him" that is wholly like himself, and anticipatory of that which shall be when the humblest of his followers will be "confessed" before the Father, and the holy

15 And he saith unto me, [a]The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, [b]are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, [c]these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate [d]and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and [e]burn her with fire.
17 [f]For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, [g]until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
18 And the woman which thou sawest [h]is that great city, [i]which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

15 him, called and chosen and faithful. And he saith unto me. The waters that thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multi-
16 tudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns that thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her
17 utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words
18 of God should be accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which [1]reigneth over the kings of the earth.

a ver. 1; Isa. 8: 7....b ch. 13: 7....c Jer. 50: 41, 42; ch. 16: 12....d Ezek. 16: 37-44; ch. 18: 16....e ch. 18: 8....f 2 Thess. 2: 11....g ch. 10: 7....h ch. 16: 19....i ch. 12: 4.—1 Gr. *hath a kingdom.*

angels. The translation in the revised version, following the corrected reading in the Greek, should be noticed: *literally*, "And they that are with him [shall overcome], called, and chosen, and faithful."

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. The woman sits upon the beast, which however stands by the "many waters." This beast, it should be remembered, is the beast out of the sea, as described in chapter thirteen. The "many waters," here, allude to this, and they serve to explain it. In each case the symbolism suggests that confused, tumultuous, ever-changing national and political life of which all history is the amazing picture, and out of which oppressive and persecuting monarchies, as well as disorderly democracies, have arisen.

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire. Under this intense imagery we have set forth what is already matter of history. No one familiar with the annals of the period following the Reformation can fail to see how accurately the prediction foreshadows the event. How hollow, after all, had been the confederacy between the Papacy and the various European powers, by which its pretensions had been maintained, was shown when, under the pressure of political interest, or the instigation of motives still less worthy, a Henry, a Francis, even a Charles, and at an earlier date, a Henry the Fourth of Germany, with the princes and republics of Italy, turned against the popes. The word "hate" in the verse just written is not too strong an expression of the animosities which flamed up in various parts of Europe against the arrogant priest, and his hierarchy, who in their claims to absolute spiritual dominion so often sought, at the same time, to override and subjugate all prerogatives of monarchs and all rights of peoples. To what an extent the animating spirit of the frequent wars between Protestant and Roman Catholic powers was hatred of Rome, no student of the history of those troubled times needs to be told. The words, "shall burn her with fire" —"*utterly* with fire," in the revised version—point to an issue of these events which is not yet reached, but is not far away.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. The more accurate translation in the revised version should be noted. What is now said indicates that political organisms and forces are not so entirely independent in their action as they themselves may suppose. Some doubt is suggested by commentators as to whose will is meant in the words, "to fulfil his will," whether it be the will of the beast—God impelling these various powers "to unite and serve the beast"—or whether it be *God's* will that is intended. The latter seems the more correct view. The whole verse sets forth the supremacy of God's purpose in the events foreshadowed. Even those who set themselves in array against him, and join in confederacy with his enemies, are acting so in accordance with that purpose—although very far from doing it with intention—as that they may be said to do his will, even in this. Much more do they so, when, under the promptings of whatever motive, they break the bonds of their evil confederacy, and in mutual strife avenge unwittingly the cause of those whom they have jointly made to suffer. In both these ways does God make the wrath of man to praise him.

18. And the woman which thou sawest

is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. The use of the present (*reigneth*), here, seems to require that we shall understand by "the great city" the Rome of that day. It is Rome, however, as a figure on the Apocalyptic scene; representing Babylon of old seated by the "many waters" of the Euphrates, and itself the symbol of another "Rome," in which what was worst in the city by the Euphrates and the city by the Tiber should re-appear. The antichristian power, in its spiritual form, is thus given to us under a twofold symbolism. It sometimes appears as a woman, assuming the character of the woman that bore the Manchild, and whom the dragon persecuted—in other words, assuming, even when most corrupt and most unlike the Church of the Lord Jesus, bought with his blood, nevertheless to be that church, with exclusive right to the name; and sometimes as a city, a metropolis, central and sovereign, rich and populous, and adorned with all that wealth and the pomps of sovereignty can bestow. The Woman is the City, because under each of these, as a symbol, the same evil power Apocalyptically appears.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

While it is important not to overstrain any part of our exposition of this chapter, it is equally important that the real significance, of portions of it especially, shall not be missed. The clue to this exposition we find, as has been seen, no doubt, partly in past, and partly in current history. If we may assume that these visions have definite meanings, at all, we are justified in searching for these in that history where fulfilled prophecy finds its adequate interpretation, or in those current aspects of the world's affairs where other fulfillments may appear, or, possibly, in those foreshadowings of the future which the present does sometimes afford.

The more recent tendency of opinion, as regards Apocalyptic exposition, has been toward views which discredit the custom, so long prevalent with writers upon this book, of fixing upon historical persons and specific historical events as intended by the symbols employed in the several visions. Were there no other ground for such discredit, this fact alone were sufficient, that it has been found impossible to reach anything like agreement as to the actual persons or the events which shall be decided upon as answering the conditions of the problems in each case. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that each individual writer has his own distinct theory as to that point, so that the study of the various interpretations proposed leaves one as if in a wilderness of conflicting opinion. And, indeed, one can readily see how this should be. There have been so many personages in history since this book was written *like* the symbolical figures appearing in the visions, and so many events *like* what the prophecy seems to foreshadow, that very naturally the selection made out of these by any writer is determined just by the impression he happens to receive as to the degree of this likeness, in the one case or in the other. Is it to be supposed that the interpretation of a book like this, filling a place so peculiar among the inspired books, and bearing upon its face such evidence of vast significance, would be left to contingencies such as these, and indeed any final judgments as to its real meaning be thus made practically impossible?

It would only confuse the reader to give in detail the various theories of exposition proposed for the sinister figures presented to view in this seventeenth chapter, and which are, so evidently, reproductions of those of the thirteenth. The Romanist school has its explanations, carefully devised to evade the conclusions reached by Protestant interpreters. The Rationalist school has others, the aim of which is to escape any inference of even a possibly prophetical character in the book or in any part of it. Those who look upon the whole representation as foreshadowing things still future, the "Futurists," have their conjectures as to the identity of the wild beast; while those who take it that the prophecy has already reached its complete fulfillment, the "Preterists" are, of course, at the opposite extreme. Hence, the variety of interpretations given of the seven heads of the beast; as, the seven forms of Roman government, during the whole history of that people, kings, consuls, decemvirs, military tribunes, dictators, emperors, and finally the Gothic King Odoacer; or seven emperors, selected as the fancy or judgment of the writer might dictate. Some explain the seven heads allegorically, as denoting the seven chief vices: pride, avarice, luxury, gluttony, envy, anger, and sloth. Rénan, in

his "*Antechrist*," makes what is called the "Nero-fable" the originating principle of the whole book ("*mère de l'Apocalypse*"). This was the rumor prevalent at one time in the East, that Nero had not been killed, as was supposed, but that he still lived, and would in due time return, recover the empire, and resume his brutal reign. "More than one pretender," says Dean Merivale, "arose to claim his empire, and twenty years later a false Nero was protected by the Parthians, among whom he had taken refuge, and only surrendered to the repeated and vehement demands of the Roman government." Upon this fable Rénan conceives that the author of the Apocalypse founded his whole scheme. In his analysis of the book, having reached the seventeenth chapter, Rénan says: "The beast is Nero, whom the people have believed to be dead, who will return, but whose second reign will be ephemeral, and end in final overthrow. The seven heads have a double meaning; they are the seven hills upon which Rome is seated; but they are above all seven emperors—Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba. The five first are dead; Galba is now reigning, but he is old and feeble, and will soon fall. The sixth, Nero, who is at the same time the beast and one of the seven kings, is not dead really; he will reign again, but for a little time; thus he will be the eighth king, and will then perish. As to the ten horns, they are the proconsuls and the imperial legates of the ten principal provinces, who are not real kings . . . These kings in part are as hostile to the Christians as Nero himself. Representing the interests of the provinces, they will humiliate Rome, will take from her the right to dispose of the empire, a right which until then she has enjoyed; they will maltreat her, will set her on fire, and will divide amongst themselves the relics of her greatness."

This is the pivot upon which Rénan's theory of exposition for the Apocalypse turns. It may represent the rationalistic method of dealing with this book, in general. How necessary it becomes to cramp and belittle the whole Apocalyptic scheme, readers will easily understand. The author of the book is no longer the apostle, but a pseudo-John, a fanatical Jew, though at the same time a Christian, who takes this method to gratify the desire of vengeance excited by Roman oppression and persecution, alike of Jew and of Christian, and to triumph over the impending destruction, signs of which were already seen in the political confusions into which the empire was rapidly falling. The date of the writing is fixed arbitrarily in the reign of Galba. History and criticism alike are compelled to grind in the mill of this rationalistic interpretation. It is not surprising, in the least, that Rénan's book, though written with all the splendor of style and the fascinating art of narration for which he is well known, has failed to gain any currency for his peculiar ideas as to the origin and meaning of the Apocalypse.

As we have had occasion before to say, we find no system of interpretation for this remarkable book suited to the grandeur of its own conception and plan, save that which views the long period covered by it upon the same large scale, finding in it the movement, rather, of great forces and epochal events, than of individuals, however conspicuous, or of specific events, however striking in some of their aspects they may seem. Antichrist, therefore, as has already been shown, is neither an individual nor any one political power or organism; it is not even any one system hostile to the spiritual Kingdom of God, like Romanism. It is that deadly force, manifested in all ages, and organizing itself under many imperial forms, by which God's gracious purposes toward men have always been resisted, and are so still. It bears the name of Antichrist, because for those living in the Christian age this is the name most appropriate for it, inasmuch as, while Christ himself represents, in his person and in his spiritual reign, divine purposes of wisdom and grace, it is especially against *him* that all the warfare is directed. Whether by open assault or by insidious undermining, the aim is to overthrow that which he builds up, and bring to naught those human hopes which most of all centre in him. It is the peculiar characteristic of this latest form of the world-old Antichrist that it pretends to be itself that which it has set itself with such animosity of purpose to destroy. Hence the propriety of the symbolism under which it appears as a woman, claiming to be the very Church of God itself—the Mother of the Man-child—yet a woman debauched and debauching, at-

tended by her retinue of royal lovers, arrayed in harlot splendors, and so representing, even while calling itself by the holiest names, all that is most corrupting and debasing. The force that sustains this latest and worst organic manifestation of the antichristian principle is the same which has lived on through so many centuries and so many changes. Its old-world manifestations have had their day, and "are fallen." Yet the hostile and deadly force itself survives, and in such vigor that it carries this new development of the same principle to even greater achievements in wickedness than any before recorded. But the hour of doom for this also is sure to come. The powers once in confederacy with the papal Antichrist in time turn against it. The ten horns hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Yet, though she perishes, the beast on which she rides still lives on—the hostile antichristian *principle* remains, combining in its manifestations qualities seen in all the seven heads of the beast, and so appearing as an *eighth* head; and in this form encountering the final doom—it "goes into perdition."

We must ask the reader to note some of those aspects of the present period which may suggest that it is now the time of that "eighth" head of the beast which is "of the seven and goeth into perdition." (1) The first is that the prophecy as to the destruction of the alliance between the harlot and the ten horns upon the seventh head of the beast, has so evidently been fulfilled. We have accepted, in our exposition, the view which regards this seventh head of the beast with its ten horns as that "aggregation of monarchies" into which the Roman Empire, represented by the sixth head, was broken up. The histories of the last three or four centuries show to us this group of monarchies, the European governments—at first nearly all confederate with the Papacy and supporting its usurpations—one after the other turning against it, until in the very seat and centre of its power, in Italy and Rome itself, the annihilating blow to its supremacy was given. Romanism survives, but the Papacy has been reduced to driveling imbecility; and the instruments of this have been the ten horns of the beast. (2) Opposition to a true Christianity survives. Indeed, there has seldom, perhaps never, been an age in which the assault upon Christianity, in its Scriptural and primitive form, was more determined or more deadly than in our own. Antichrist himself is not dead, nor inert. (3) What characterizes the age peculiarly, in the respect now noticed, is the *variety of form* assumed by this antichristian hostility. In part it is political; the old forms of intolerant oppression for conscience' sake, have as yet by no means ceased. In part, it is hierarchical and ritual abuse. Romanism maintains all the spiritual pretensions of its priesthood, its mariolatries, and its ritual shows; asserts still the efficacy of masses, and prayers to the saints; parades still its crosses, its images, its consecrated wafers, its celibacies, and its indulgences—while in other so-called Christian communities these are feebly copied, yet with enough of their spirit to retain much of their mischievousness. In part, the antichristian hostility takes the form of false teaching. The "false prophet" has by no means abdicated his functions. In truth, never was this form of the long assault upon the Kingdom of God more active or more determined than now. The defences of the sacred city are tested at every point. The watchmen on the wall are compelled to sleepless vigilance; the soldier of Christ can never for a moment, with safety, "lay his armor by." Too often the enemy is found in the very heart of the citadel, while antichristian doctrine is preached in Christian pulpits, and the dialect of Zion is heard upon the lips of her deadliest foes.

It does not seem like a suggestion of the imagination merely, to see thus, in the aspects of the present time what may explain the symbolism of that eleventh verse of our chapter, to which we are now alluding. If we are right in the view we take, a clue is given us to much in what appears in current history that may be perplexing, and even alarming. Doubtless Antichrist is active still, and commands a variety of agencies and methods that make his schemes peculiarly formidable. But it is for him "the last time." After all, what we see is rather a scattering than a multiplying of force. One after the other, new forms of attack suffer defeat. No one of them succeeds. The end is foreshadowed in the incidents of each passing day. The Beast has reached his final manifestation "and goeth into perdition."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND [a]after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; [2]and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, [c]Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and [d]is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and [e]a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

1 AFTER these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and
2 the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a [1]hold of every unclean spirit, and a

a ch. 17: 1....b Ezek. 43: 2....c Isa. 13: 19; 21: 9; Jer. 51: 8; ch. 14: 8....d Isa. 13: 21; 21: 8; 34: 14; Jer. 50: 39; 51: 37....
e Isa. 14: 23; 34: 11; Mark 5: 2, 3.—1 Or, *prison*.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

1-3. THE HERALDIC ANGEL.

1. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven. "Descending out of heaven," will, perhaps, best express what actually took place. The expression, "*another* angel," probably does not refer, explicitly, to any one of the previous angelic appearances. Still, as we take into account the description which follows in this verse, we may see a closer connection with ch. 10: 1, than with any other place in which the angel is described descending from heaven.—**Having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory.** The word, here (ἐξουσία), indicates "authority," not "power." The translation in the revision is therefore the correct one. The force of the word (ἐξουσία) appears to be indicated in the concluding words of the verse, "and the earth was lightened with his glory." The meaning seems to be that this angelic form was seen resplendent with a glory that indicated how truly representative he was of the divine authority and purpose; as, when the ambassador of a great king, anciently, was sent upon some especially important mission, one was chosen whose rank and personal dignity made him the fit incumbent of such an office, while his retinue and outfit were made to have a splendor suitable to the greatness of the monarch by whom he was sent, and the importance of his commission. In this case, as in former ones, we see no occasion for attempts to identify the angel, whether as one of the archangels, or as the Holy Spirit, or as the Lord himself. The angelic figure seen, like others introduced in these visions, is symbolical and representative. The angel both symbolizes and represents the power and purpose of God, in respect to that which is here announced, viz.: the overthrow and final destruction of mystical Babylon.

2. And he cried mightily, with a strong voice. The word "mightily" should be omitted. It is not in the Greek text. "He cried with a mighty voice," is the proper rendering.—**Saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.** The closing verse of the previous chapter is: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." With this guide to the interpretation of the symbol, it seems surprising that any expositors should have failed to identify the city in this chapter as the woman in the previous one. And since among Protestant communities it is so generally agreed that the woman must be understood as Papal Rome, the conclusion seems clear that the symbolism of the city must be understood in the same way. It cannot, therefore, be imperial Rome (Bossuet, Hengstenberg), nor Rome simply as a city (Bengel), nor in the more general and rather vague view, the "world-city," as the Speaker's Commentary seems to interpret. The picture in this chapter is so perfectly descriptive of the overthrow and ruin of an actual city, that writers upon it seem to have sometimes been misled thereby, and to have thus fallen into a literal method of interpretation which cannot be justified, either by the tenor of the passage itself, or by the general usage of the book. The double form of the symbolism, it is true, might be supposed to offer critical difficulties. The same power appears in chapter seventeen as a woman, and in chapter eighteen as a city. The two are after all discriminated, and there is no real confusion. The allegory in each case is consistently maintained, while it is in nowise amiss that what in one of these vivid pictures is a city, should, in a change of representation, appear in the other as a woman. That which we find in this present chapter is certainly very striking, alike in conception and in delineation. Under the symbol of a city, such as Babylon of old was, a pretentious, worldly,

3 For all nations [c]have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, [b]and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

3 [1]hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For [2]by [3]the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her [4]wantonness.

a ch. 14:8; 17:2....*b* ver. 11:15; Isa. 47:15.——1 Or, *prison*....2 Some authorities read, *of the wine . . . have drunk*....3 Some ancient authorities omit, *the wine of*....4 Or, *luxury*.

corrupt, domineering, and oppressive system of false religion is represented in its spirit, its forms, the means used to ensure its supremacy, the deceitful glory that crowns it, and the awful ruin that overtakes it in the end. The imagery is perfect in its every detail, each stroke of the rapid pencil in harmony with the ideal. Nor, when we bear in mind the grand scope of the book as a whole, and how its real subject is nothing less than the beginning, and growth, and struggle, and ordeal, and final triumph of the Kingdom of God among men, can we bring ourselves to believe that this graphic picture of consummating events can relate to anything less than the downfall of that power, in which antichristian opposition to God's kingdom had its latest and most formidable organic manifestation? We understand by Babylon, therefore, the Rome of the Papacy, here depicted under the figure of a great city, the centre alike of political and commercial supremacy; once, like Babylon, declaring: "I shall be a lady forever" (Isa. 47:7), or as in ver. 7 of this chapter: "I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow;" yet now brought to the ground, a ruin, a desolation, and a lesson forever. The verb, in the words written above: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" (the Greek aorist), denotes, says Burger, "the *certainty* of what is to happen." The seer, although the actual event lies far down in the future from his own time, beholds it, nevertheless, as already accomplished.—**And is become the** [a] **habitation of devils** ["*demons*"]. The conception is that of a city lying in utter ruin and desolation, without human inhabitants, yet the befitting resort of those demons that delight in calamity, and in those waste and desolate places which are most like their own dismal habitation.—**And the hold of every foul spirit.** The Greek word (φυλακή) literally means "prison." Some writers, like De Wette and Hengstenberg, understand by it a place of banishment; others, a place of custody. The same word occurs in the next succeeding clause, **a cage of unclean birds.** The revision translates "hold," as will be seen, in each place. In some sense it is a "cage," a "prison," alike to the unclean birds and the unclean spirits; since it is the place to which both alike are conceived as driven from the abodes of men, and from every scene in which some element of purity and felicity might remain. As the unclean bird avoids the human habitations, and is found, rather, in localities where corruption and all hideous things abound, so the unclean spirits may be supposed to haunt the same; as if driven to and imprisoned by that element which is most in keeping with their own uncleanness. The imagery here, then, reproduces that graphic passage in Isaiah (13:21), where, of the great and wicked city by the Euphrates, it is said: "Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs [some, as Stuart, understand these as here, 'demons'] shall dance there."

3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her. This is almost a repetition of 17:2, and clearly suggests the identity of the city in this chapter with the woman in that. The change of reading indicated by the translators in the revised version will be noticed. Tischendorf, in his eighth edition, expresses doubt as to whether the error may not be in those ancient copies upon which change of the words "have drunk" (πέπωκαν), to "have fallen" (πέπτωκαν), is made to rest. Carpenter regards the two renderings as "akin." The Alexandrine manuscript omits the word "wine" (οἴνου); an omission, however, which Westcott and Hort evidently treat as of doubtful authority, while the revisers do not recognize it.—**And the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.** The picture is that of a great city, the centre of the world's commerce, abounding in luxury and in all the means of worldly indulgence; in the ample and abundant market

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, a Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of

a Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 45; 2 Cor. 6:17.

it affords for all manner of delicacies enriching "the merchants of the earth." This prepares us for what is said in ver. 11, of the mourning of the merchants at her final overthrow. Applying the imagery, we find it descriptive of those seductions through which the papal Babylon succeeded in winning to its allegiance every worldly interest, having at its devotion not only "the kings," the political forces of the world, but also its "merchants," and alike the ministers and the devotees of luxury

4-10. THE SUMMONING VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven. Another voice besides that of the descending angel. Bengel and Hengstenberg understand it as the voice of Christ. As the Speaker's Commentary justly says, this is "opposed to the character of the entire passage," which, indeed is, in the form of it, like the many other angelic proclamations in the book.—**Come out of her, my people.** Just for the reason that the angelic utterance is *representative*, it is as if the utterance of God himself, or of Christ. The angel speaks, here as elsewhere, not in his own name, nor his own words, but in the name and in the words of that divine authority which speaks through him.—**That ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.** The rendering of the revised version is more correct, and at the same time expresses the meaning more exactly. The two clauses, "have no fellowship with her sins"—"receive not of her plagues," are closely connected, as cause and consequence. God's people are enjoined to leave the wicked city, lest they shall be drawn into partnership with her in her iniquities, and share also in her punishment. A passage strikingly parallel with this is that in Jeremiah 50: 8, where, announcing the impending ruin of ancient Babylon, the prophet exhorts the Lord's people: "Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks." And again, still more noticeably, in 51: 6: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense." These predictions of the impending overthrow of the literal Babylon afford, evidently, a basis for the imagery in this chapter. The warning uttered in the words now under consideration, finds its counterpart not only in the passages just quoted from Jeremiah, but in other parts of the Old Testament; as in the warning to Lot to flee out of Sodom (Gen. 19: 15, 22), to the "congregation" to depart out of the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16: 26), and again in Isaiah (48: 20), to depart out of Babylon, with the testimony, "The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob." The injunction of our Saviour to his own disciples, to flee out of Jerusalem in the day of its impending doom (Matt. 24: 16), is still a further example of parallelism. Applying the imagery as thus suggested, we seem to find evidence in the words now studied that even in that modern Babylon, the so-called Roman Church, there would be found some of the Lord's true people. They are there, however, as Israel in the Babylon of old; as the Lord's disciples in wicked and doomed Jerusalem. Canon Wordsworth, in commenting upon the passage, says: "Even now, at this present time—as this prophecy means—the Holy Spirit, who reads the heart, and who wrote the Apocalypse, sees some people of God in Rome." When one reads, indeed, or sings the familiar hymn of Bernard of Clairvaux, beginning—

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest—

it seems impossible to see in the author of such words only the self-righteous monk or the mere polemic. And, again, as we sing the hymn of Thomas Aquinas:

O bread to pilgrims given,
O food that angels eat,
O manna sent from heaven,
For heaven-born natures meet!
Give us, for thee long pining,
To eat till richly filled;
Till, earth's delights resigning,
Our every wish is stilled,

5 [a]For her sins have reached unto heaven, and [b]God hath remembered her iniquities.
6 [c]Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: [d]in the cup which she hath filled [e]fill to her double.
7 [f]How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a [g]queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.
8 Therefore shall her plagues come [h]in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and [i]she shall be utterly burned with fire: [k]for strong *is* the Lord God who judgeth her.

5 her plagues: for her sins [1]have reached even unto heaven, and God had remembered her iniquities.
6 Render unto her even as she rendered, and double *unto her* the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.
7 How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed [2]wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning.
8 Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; [3]for strong is the Lord God who

a Gen. 18:20, 21; Jer. 51:9; Jonah 1:2....*b* ch. 16:19....*c* Ps. 137:8; Jer. 50:15, 29; 51:24, 49; 2 Tim. 4:13; ch. 13:10....*d* ch. 14:10....*e* ch. 16:19....*f* Ezek. 28:2, etc....*g* Isa. 47:7, 8; Zeph. 2:15....*h* ver. 10; Isa. 47:9....*i* ch. 17:16....*k* Jer. 50:34; ch. 11:17.— 1 Or, *clave together*....2 Or, *luxurious*....3 Some ancient authorities omit, *the Lord.*

it may seem strange to us, till we realize how many things influence religious prepossession and association, that men like those named, or others in our own time, should be found in a communion so utterly unlike what a church of Christ should be. Christian charity, however, takes comfort in the conviction that not all who are *in* Rome are *of* Rome. The voice of warning in the passage now before us is, also, a voice of prophecy—a prophecy fulfilled in the numerous instances in which the Lord's true people have found it impossible to longer "fellowship" the "sins" of the papal Babylon, and have "come out of her." Doubtless there are to be many more such secessions; probably, as the hour of doom for her draws on, more and greater than ever before. One element of the downfall may be the abandonment of this iniquitous system by an increasing number of those who, aware of its true character, dread lest they shall be involved in its doom.

5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Some commentators prefer the translation in the margin of the revision, "her sins *clave together* even unto heaven." "The idea," says Carpenter, in Ellicott, "is of a great heap firmly fastened, and towering, like another Babel, as far as heaven." Upon the final clause of the verse his comment is: "God hath remembered her [Babylon]. Sometimes the oppressed have thought that God had forgotten the voice of mercy; but the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation."

6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. "You" should be omitted. It is not in the amended Greek, and is misleading. It would imply that the command to visit this judgment upon Babylon is addressed to those people of God who have just been exhorted to come out of her. This is not the meaning. The address in this sixth verse is to those whom God appoints as the instruments of judgment and punishment. The correct translation, in the revised version, implies this. Who these instruments are, is not indicated. Hengstenberg thinks they are the "ten horns" mentioned in chapter seventeen. These may be included; but it should seem that the commission embraces all varieties of agencies and methods for effecting that final destruction in which shall be requited unto the mystical Babylon, fourfold, the evil it has wrought.

7. How much ["*in as many things as*"] **she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.** When pride and luxury come to their doom, the depth of the fall bears a certain proportion to that height to which presumption had soared.—**For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.** The latter negative is emphatic (οὐ μὴ)—"in no wise," "shall surely not see sorrow," or mourning. It was even thus, as we have seen, that Babylon of old boasted herself. Even more self-sufficient, haughty, and in its own imagination secure was the modern Babylon, when in the height of its power and presumption.

8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine. "Death," says Alford, "for her scorn of the prospect of widowhood, mourning for her inordinate reveling, famine for her abundance." "In one day" shall all this befall her, indicating how much as a sudden surprise the visitation shall come.—**And she shall be utterly burned with fire.** Whether, as Elliott maintains, this means the actual burning of Rome by the

9 And [a]the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, [b]shall bewail her, and lament for her, [c]when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

9 judged her. And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived [1]wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon

a Ezek. 26:16, 17; ch. 17:2; ver. 3....b Jer. 50:46....c ver. 18; ch. 19:3.——1 Or, *luxuriously*.

army of the Duke of Bourbon, the general of Charles V., is much more than doubtful. The language is wholly figurative, the allusion being to the fact that in the final overthrow of cities, anciently, the flame finished what the storm and the sack had begun. In excavating, now, those mounds which are all that remains of such cities—Troy, or Nineveh, or others—the explorer finds evidence abundant that in this way the crowning ruin was wrought. Our passage simply means that, in the overthrow of mystical Babylon, its destruction shall be utter and entire. There may also be an allusion to the punishment appointed for the harlot in Lev. 20:14; 21:9.—**For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.** We may recall the words in 17:17: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will." Overruling providences direct to the purposed end the agencies necessary to its accomplishment. As the connection of the words just quoted show, these agencies will be found in those worldly powers which had "given their kingdom unto the beast," had lent themselves to the designs of Antichrist, and been willing servants of his in his war upon the people and the Kingdom of God; and which, as we know, were during centuries in close confederacy with the popes and their hierarchy in all the worst iniquities done by them. These at last turn against the harlot (ch. 17:16); they hate her, they make her desolate and naked, they eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Connecting these words with those now more immediately before us, we perceive that the divine "strength" seen in the overthrow of mystical Babylon is not in any direct exertion of divine power, but, as we have said, in that overruling of the divine providences, which turns to ministers of his will those powers of the world that, far from having any view to the promotion of his designs, only seek their own ends of selfish ambition. In nothing is the almightiness of God more signalized in history than where, thus, he both uses and "restrains" the wrath of man.

9, 10. THE MOURNING OF THE KINGS.

9. And the kings of the earth. By "the kings," here, are those world-powers intended which have already appeared on the scene as instruments of the city's overthrow? It is not necessary, we may say in reply, to treat the vision as if it were a connected and consistent narrative of actual events. The whole representation is scenic and dramatic, and is to be interpreted accordingly. Neither, therefore, is it necessary to regard the "kings" who take part in this lamentation as the very same as those who become, under the constraining impulses of divine providence, the immediate instruments of Babylon's destruction. It is "the ten horns" of the beast which hate the harlot and burn her with fire. These words point to certain specific world-powers, European monarchies, at first confederate with the Papacy, and afterwards compelled by the extravagance of its pretensions and the outrageousness of its usurpations to turn against it. The vivid picture now especially before us is of another kind; more general, less distinct and specific in the figures that appear in it, and less affected by limits of time. Besides, even those powers providentially made instruments for bringing upon the doomed city deserved judgment, must not be supposed to have acted with any consciousness of what they were doing, least of all with any purpose to make the overthrow so complete and awful. When the Emperor Charles sent an army against Rome itself, it was not that he had become a supporter of the Reformation. When Henry the Eighth proclaimed himself head of the Church of England, it was not that he had become at heart and really a Protestant. The ecclesiastical policy of kings, in that age peculiarly, was determined by their political policy, or by private passion or pique. It was the divine overruling that made their acts so destructive of papal power and pretension. Although, therefore, we should view these same powers as included with the "the kings of the earth" here represented as lamenting the overthrow of Babylon, there is no neccessary inconsistency implied; while, in fact, the picture is, as we said, altogether general, and is intended to make more vivid and intense our concep-

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, [a]Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! [b]for in one hour is thy judgment come.
11 And [c]the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.

10 the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy
11 judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their

a Isa. 21: 9; ch. 14: 8....b ver. 17: 19....c Ezek. 27: 27-36; ver. 3.

tion of that great event, the fall and destruction of mystical Babylon.—**Who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her.** It is the past relation between them and the harlot-city which they recall, and which now again comes to the foreground of the scene, as represented.—**Shall bewail her and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.** In Jeremiah 50: 46, we read: "At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations." On whatever terms of antagonism and hostility great cities or empires may stand with each other, when some vast calamity visits one of them, a shudder passes through all the rest. While, perhaps, they triumph over the downfall of an enemy or a rival, underneath this feeling there is the reminder how unstable is all earthly greatness, and the consciousness of liability to calamities of the same nature. Even the overthrow of a power like the Papacy, or its weakening to such an extent as to make it no longer dreaded, while it may have been a relief in one way to the political powers so long restive under its meddlesome pretensions, yet could not fail to be looked upon by them with apprehension. Though often a perplexing and annoying element in political complications, it had, nevertheless, been often a convenience; besides that despotisms of every kind are wont to make common cause against human freedom and against all efforts to destroy, or even limit, their absolutism.

10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment. This is no generous sorrow, sympathizing and anxious to afford relief. It "stands afar off," selfishly solicitous lest some spark of the great burning shall kindle a conflagration nearer home.—**Saying, Alas, alas,** [*woe, woe*], **that great city Babylon, that mighty city.** A like vivid scene is depicted at Ezek. 26: 15, 16, where of Tyre the prophet says: "Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments; they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee." See, also, Ezek. 27: 35.—**For in one hour is thy judgment come.** The same words, "in one hour," are found in ver. 17, 19, recurring, says a writer on the passage, "with the monotony of a passing bell."

11-16. LAMENTATION OF THE MERCHANTS.

11. And the merchants of the earth shall [omit "*shall*"—the verb is present tense] **weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise** [*cargo*] **any more.** In ver. 3, we have already been told how "the merchants of the earth waxed rich" through their traffic with the now doomed city, hastening to its downfall. Of this we are reminded here. In the enumeration which follows, the picture is perfect of a great city, stretching its lines of commerce in all directions, even to the remotest sources of traffic, gathering unto itself all that can most efficiently minister to its pride and luxury. For a literal counterpart to it, one may read with profit what is said of Tyre, in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters of Ezekiel. In the Rome of his own time, however, John might readily find another; and indeed the city by the Tiber may have, in great part at least, supplied him with the original of this graphic delineation. The following sentences might almost be thought to have been written by Gibbon ("Decline and Fall," Vol. I., Ch. 2) as illustrative of our present passage: "The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forest of Scythia afforded some valuable furs. Amber was brought overland from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received in exchange for so useless a commodity. There was a considerable demand

12 a The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and b slaves, and c souls of men.

12 1 merchandise any more; 1 merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron,
13 and marble; and cinnamon, and 2 spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and *merchandise* of horses and chariots and 3 slaves;

a ch. 17: 4....b Ezek. 27: 13.— —1 Gr. *cargo*....2 Gr. *amomum*....3 Gr. *bodies*.

for Babylonian carpets, and other manufactures of the East; but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. . . . The return of the fleet of Egypt was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported on camels from the Red Sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured, without delay, into the capital of the empire. The objects of Oriental traffic were splendid and trifling; silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold; precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond; and a variety of aromatics, that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labor and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit." There was, indeed, no lack of instances, present or past, suggestive of imagery such as that by which the passage now studied is made so graphic. Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Alexandria, Rome, and other of the great cities enriched and corrupted by conquest or by commerce, stand in history as examples of that prosperity which builds its gaudy structures upon the brink of ruin. When at last the gulf swallows them, nations and communities feel the shock as depicted here, while the selfish sorrow and consternation of those who have found in the folly, and luxury, and splendor of such cities markets for their "merchandise," is such as under the symbols of this vision we find so strikingly set forth.

12, 13. The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls. The articles of merchandise enumerated in these verses may be classified in groups. First are the treasures here named. Next the "soft clothing" and other luxurious attire, **fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet;** those materials used in the finishing and furnishing of luxurious dwellings; **thyine** [*sweet-scented*] **wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble;** then aromatics, such as Gibbon also mentions, **cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense;** next articles of drink and food, **wine and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep;** then **horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.** "The climax of wicked worldliness," says a writer, "is reached in this last; it gives the finishing touch to the picture of a society wholly engrossed in pleasure and indolence and selfishness, which lays every market under tribute to add to its luxuriousness, and sacrifices not only the happiness, but the lives and liberties of their fellow-creatures to their own enjoyment. The word translated "slaves" is, literally, "bodies." Some expositors prefer to translate the word thus literally, and this rendering, as will be observed, is also given in the margin of the revision.* We may, perhaps, say that by "bodies" are meant slaves viewed simply as compelled to servile labor; while "*souls* of men" is, as Lange expresses it, "indicative of an augmentation, the extreme

*The structure of the clause, as it stands in the Greek, is peculiar, and somewhat perplexing. There are three words in the genitive which would be literally translated *and of horses* (ἱππων), *and of chariots* (ῥεδῶν), *and of slaves* (σωμάτων). Then, in the accusative, *and souls of men* (ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων). Another instance of the same kind is found in the previous verse (ver. 12), where, following merchandise (γόμον), we have a succession of genitives, and then in the accusative, "all thyine wood" (πᾶν ξύλον θύινον). It is an example of what Winer (sect. 63: 2: 1) calls "the *oratio variata*," which "is found," he says, "in accurate writers, when the sequence of the preceding construction would have been heavy, ambiguous, or not entirely suited to the thought." "It takes place when, in parallel sentences and members of sentences, two (synonymous) constructions have been adopted, each of which is complete in itself." He calls it "*heterogeneous* structure of a sentence." If we accept this, then "souls of men," in the accusative, is a "synonymous" though "heterogeneous" form of expression, with change of case to give it the more of emphasis, and so lending intensity to what is implied in the (σωμάτων), or "bodies."

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.
15 [a]The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, [b]that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!
17 [c]For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And [d]every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

14 and [1]souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee,
15 and *men* shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment,
16 weeping and mourning; saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and [2]decked with gold and
17 precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as [3]gain their living by sea, stood afar

a ver. 3 : 11....*b* ch. 17 : 4....*c* ver. 10....*d* Isa. 23 : 14; Ezek. 27 : 29.—1 Or, *lives*....2 Gr. *gilded*....3 Gr. *work the sea.*

consequence of slave-holding." The slavery described, therefore, was not simply of the body, but of the soul; and traffic in such slaves was traffic, far more than simply in the bodies—in the *souls* of men. It is, as is said in Ellicott: "The finishing touch to a picture of society wholly engrossed in pleasure and indolence and selfishness"—"wicked worldliness" in its "climax."

14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. This is in the nature of an apostrophe to the wicked and worldly city, in its hour of doom. The "sumptuous" of the revision is more correctly expressive than the "goodly" of the older version. The "shall find," besides, is in the third person, not in the second, as the old version imports.

15. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing. In the description of the wailing of the kings, the future tense of the verb is used ("shall bewail her"); at the eleventh verse, in the best Greek, which the revision follows, the tense changes to "the graphic present," as Alford terms it; in this fifteenth verse the future is resumed. Like the kings, the merchants "stand afar off," in selfish "fear of her torment." Even this lament expresses, not sorrow for the doomed city, but lamentation at the loss of such wealth, and such opportunities of merchandize.

16. And saying, Alas, alas, that [*the*] **great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls** [*stone* and *pearl*]. Observe how the attention is wholly occupied with the exterior splendors of the city. It is the loss of these which the merchants lament; to what is *beyond* these they give no thought.

17. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought [*is made desolate*]. Still it is the "riches." Here recurs, also, the dismal refrain, "in one hour."

17-19. Lament of the Shipmasters.

17. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea. The amended text reads, "and every one sailing to a place," or "sailing any whither" (*καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων*), for "and all [the company] in ships" (*καὶ πᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων*). The clause, "as many as trade by sea," may be translated, "as many as work (*ἐργάζονται*) the sea." The *Speaker's Commentary*, as also Lange, prefers "pilot" to "shipmaster." The former word, however, would now be misleading. The pilot, anciently, accompanied the ship in its entire voyage, while the modern one is called into service only on vessels entering or leaving harbor. The word "shipmaster" perhaps expresses the meaning as correctly as any that can be found. The clause, "all that sail anywhither," seems to be general, descriptive of those who make voyages, whether as connected with the working of ships, or using them simply for purposes of transport. Next are mentioned the sailors, and after these all such as are interested in the sea as the highway of traffic, or as in any way the source of gain, including fishermen, pearl-divers, etc. This specific mention makes the description more graphic.—**Stood afar off.** In each case—kings, merchants, shipmasters, sailors—the group described stands "afar off." The same feature of avoidance appears in all. They lament, but they do not sympathize; least of all do they offer help. They are as

18 [a]And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, [b]What *city is* like unto this great city!
19 And [c]they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! [d]for in one hour is she made desolate.
20 [e]Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets: for [f]God hath avenged you on her.

18 off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city* is like the great city?
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour
20 is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

[a] Ezek. 27 : 30, 31; ver. 9....[b] ch. 13 : 4....[c] Josh. 7 : 6; 1 Sam. 4 : 12; Job 2 : 12; Ezek. 27 : 30....[d] ver. 8....[e] Isa. 44 : 23; 49 : 13; Jer. 51 : 48....[f] Luke 11 : 49, 50; ch. 19 : 2.

if conscious that the doomed city perishes at the hand of God, and as if while grieving at the magnitude of the worldly loss, nevertheless recognizing a kind of justice in the overthrow. Babylon is for each of these groups "that great city"; not however with a greatness that commands from them any emotion of either reverence or pity. Their sorrow is wholly a selfish sorrow. "The hope of their gains is gone."

> But yesterday, the word of Cæsar might
> Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
> And none so poor to do him reverence.

18. And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! In what sense these words are to be taken, the next verse shows.

19. And they cast dust on their heads, weeping and wailing. The casting of dust on the head, or lying prostrate in the dust, were Oriental modes of expressing the extremity of grief or despair. The verb "stood" in the previous verse, and "cast" in the present one, are, of course, in the past tense, to which the future in previous verses here changes. These transitions from future to present (ver. 11, 12, 13), and again from present to future (ver. 15, 16), and now, once more from future to past, are indicative of the animated character of the description. It is as if in the hurry of narration, and in the rapid changes of the Apocalyptic scenery, present, past, and future become in a manner confused.—**Saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness!** The shipmen and traders are like the merchants. It is that many were made rich by her; for this they lament the doom of Babylon. Alford prefers to translate, "where*by* were made." He thinks the "in" (*ἐν*), cannot be local, as it is made to be in the authorized version. Carpenter and others prefer the rendering, "in which all who had their vessels in the sea grew rich out of her costliness"—out of "her extravagances of living and the splendor of her palaces, which drew materials from all parts of the world."—**For in one hour is she made desolate.** Once more the refrain, "in one hour"; the words, "is she made desolate," answer to those in the lament of the merchants: "in one hour so great riches is made desolate."

20. Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets. In ver. 4, a voice from heaven has summoned all in Babylon who are the Lord's people to "come out of her." This same voice, it seems to be, now calls upon heaven and all holy beings to rejoice over her fall. These are placed in a position of marked contrast to the worldly and covetous groups of mourners before introduced, lamenting the fate of the harlot with whom they had "lived deliciously," of the great city wherein "so many were made rich." The change in the revised version from "holy apostles and prophets," to "ye saints, ye apostles, and ye prophets," rests upon an amended reading in the Greek text. It has been argued, says Carpenter, "that this verse represents the apostles to be in heaven, and from this it has been inferred that the twelve must all have died before the Apocalypse was written; and, if so, St. John was not the writer. The verse, however, has no reference whatever to the question; it is not meant to state who have passed into heaven and who have not; it is simply a summons to all who have fought on the side of their Lord to rejoice at the removal of one of the great obstacles to the manifestation of Christ's Kingdom."—**For God hath avenged you on her.** The translation here involves an idea which does not belong to the passage in the original. The revision translates properly, and gives the true sense. It is not "vengeance" upon the Roman Babylon for which even they call who have suffered most at her hands. It is that righteousness

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, [a]Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and [b]shall be found no more at all.
22 [c]And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall

21 And [1]a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.
22 And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, [2]of whatsoever craft,

a Jer. 51:64....b ch. 12:8; 16:20....c Isa. 24:8; Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Ezek. 26:13.—1 Gr. *one*....2 Some ancient authorities omit, *of whatsoever craft*.

and justice may be vindicated in the case of a power by whom both have been, during long ages of oppression and wrong, outraged and set at nought. It is, to use again the words of the writer just quoted, such a rejoicing as "all holy men, whether on earth or in heaven," experience, "when any great evil is swept away." It may be proper to connect this verse, in its exposition, with the prayer of the martyrs in 6: 10. Again, in 16: 5–7, there is mention made of that righteous judgment of God which visits upon persecuting powers the blood they have shed. The revisers use a somewhat peculiar phraseology in the literal rendering of the Greek: "God hath judged your judgment on her." The exact force of the words "judged your judgment," is not clear. The *Speaker's Commentary* suggests, "(1) Either 'what you have judged,' or 'what she hath judged concerning you.' (2) 'What seemed right to you.'" Hengstenberg's paraphrase is, "The doom which she pronounced upon you, the judgment which she held over you, your condemnation"; as in ch. 13: 10: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." This is, perhaps, on the whole, the most likely interpretation. There may be an allusion to what we have in ch. 17: 16: "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make here desolate and naked, *and shall burn her utterly with fire.*" By this fearful manner of death many and many a martyr perished at the hands of the Roman harlot. By the same shall she perish. Her violent dealing shall come down upon her own head.

21-24. The Stone Cast into the Sea.

21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea. Literally, the words are, "one strong angel." Winer (18:9) seems to consider the numeral "one" (εἷς), in places like this, as used for the indefinite pronoun (τις), "a certain one." Thus the rendering would be, "a certain strong angel." It is to be noticed how exactly the symbolism, here, copies that of predictions against Babylon, Tyre, and other doomed cities, in the Old Testament. Thus, in Jeremiah 51: 60–64, we read how Jeremiah "wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon," and said to Seraiah, a prince of the king's court, "when thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words," then—when thou hast made an end of this book—"thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates; and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil I will bring upon her." The symbolical action thus described is reproduced in the present passage as a picture of the doom of mystical Babylon.—**Saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.** The imagery here, while presenting the same general idea as that in previous verses, has a marked difference in form. The ruined Babylon has before been described as a desolated city, its walls and dwellings thrown prostrate or burned with fire, and completely forsaken of inhabitants. In the sense of such a ruin and a desolation, the city may be said to still survive. In the verses now before us, however, the imagery implies a complete and final destruction; as when a great stone, cast into the sea, sinks out of sight, and is "found no more at all." The two representations are not inconsistent with each other, as might possibly seem at first sight. A pile of ruins, or a desolated site, with here and there some relic of former magnificence, is not a city. Those who now visit the supposed site of ancient Babylon, whether right or wrong in their belief that there the city once stood, find no Babylon there. Babylon, in truth "is found no more at all," nor shall it ever be again. Such is the doom appointed to the Roman Antichrist.

22, 23. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers [*flute-players*],

be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
23 [a]And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; [b]and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for [c]thy merchants were the great men of the earth; [d]for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.
24 And [e]in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that [f]were slain upon the earth.

shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee: and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with
24 thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

a Jer. 25 : 10....b Jer. 7 : 34; 16 : 9; 25 : 10; 33 : 11....c Isa. 23 : 8....d 2 Kings 9 : 22; Nah. 3 : 4; ch. 17 : 2, 5....e ch. 17 : 6.... f Jer. 51 : 49.

and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee. We may compare the highly poetical language in Isaiah (24 : 8): "The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth."—**And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee.** All the sounds of busy industry have sunk into utter silence.—**And the sound of a mill-stone shall be heard no more at all in thee, and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee.** Family life has wholly ceased; the cheerful lights of home, "the sound of the grinding," all that once betokened life with its enjoyments and occupations.—**And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.** Of Jerusalem it had anciently been said: "I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle" (Jer. 25 : 10). No imagery could more vividly set forth the ruin of a busy and populous city.—**For thy merchants were the great men** [*the princes*] **of the earth.** The causes of this utter and final overthrow are now resumed and summarized; allusion being first made to the greatness of Babylon, and to the sources of that ill-used prosperity by which it had been built up.—**For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.** Here is her guilt. "We must understand," says the note in Carpenter, "her artful policy, her attractiveness, and the seductions by which she drew into the meshes of her worldliness and sin all the nations around."

24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. We are reminded of the passage in Matt. 23 : 35, 36: "That upon you [*upon Jerusalem*] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the porch and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." Auberlen reminds us that in speaking of the murders done by "the Harlot of the New Covenant," the Roman Babylon, we must not "confine our thoughts to cases like those of Huss, the Waldenses, the Huguenots, the British Martyrs, etc., or the martyrs which are yet future; but bear in mind the words, 'Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer' (1 John 3 : 15). Wherever true, faithful Christians are neglected and oppressed by the rulers of the church . . . . there we commit murder against the saints of God." In the bloody-minded and murdering "church" of the Apostasy, the persecutions of Antichrist in all former ages culminated. Indeed, so was the antichristian spirit intensified in this latest manifestation of that spirit, and with such hideous accumulation were the deeds so inspired multiplied, that it is scarcely a figure of speech to say, as is said here: "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We must once more call attention to the fact, and emphasize it, that what we find in this chapter, is Apocalyptic imagery, throughout. Those who treat it as descriptive of the Roman city itself, overlook this; besides that, the visitations upon Rome under the northern barbarians, though severe, fell far short of realizing the intense symbolism of this chapter. Great as were the calamities suffered by the city, either then or at any other time, they never approached the reality of what we have here set forth. A similar objection lies against the explanation of Elliott, in *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, who, including with this chapter the nineteenth, also, as far as ver. 4, and viewing the fulfillment as still future, draws these conclusions from the whole: "(1) The destruction of Rome, the mystic Babylon (comprehend-

ing not only the city and the ecclesiastical state; but probably the political tripartition, and unexpectedly, be effected by an *earthquake* and *volcanic fire*. (2) Immediately before this event there will be a great diffusion of religious light, and a sounding forth of strong appeals on the character and imminent doom, both of Rome and the Popedom, alike in the church and in the world. (3) The Jews will probably at, or just after, this catastrophe, be converted (indicated by the *Hebrew Hallelujah*—this being the first introduction of a word from that language in *praise*). (4) Down to the time figured by this chorus (a song represented as being *in heaven*), no translation of the living saints or resurrection of the departed will have taken place." Stuart, also, in some parts of his comment on this chapter, seems to understand by Babylon the city of Rome. Elliott's view, while it is open to the objection of losing sight, in some places, of the symbolical character of the whole chapter, which makes it impossible that any literal and actual city should be understood, encumbers the exposition with fanciful interpretations, like those which have been so much the bane of Apocalyptic exposition from the beginning.

We have already called attention to the evident fact that the woman of chapter seventeen is the city of chapter eighteen. The angel says to John, distinctly (17:18): "The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." The difference between the vision in chapter seventeen and that in chapter eighteen, may be stated in the following particulars: (1) The change of symbolism, so that the woman in the one chapter becomes the city in the other; (2) the fact that the judgment announced in the former is more dwelt upon, in the latter, with more detailed description; (3) the change of imagery descriptive of this judgment, a change made necessary by the change of the woman-symbol to that of a city; and (4) the fact that, while in chapter seventeen the *instruments* of Babylon's overthrow are indicated, in chapter eighteen the *nature* and *consequences* of that overthrow are more dwelt upon.

As to the identification of the woman in the one chapter, and so of the city in the other—the clue seems given us in the fact that this symbol of a woman is employed at all. So far as we know, commentators are agreed that by the woman in chapter twelve, mother of the Man-child, driven by the dragon into the wilderness, must be understood *the Church*, in that large sense which makes it identical with the spiritual Kingdom of God in the world, embracing all times, and the Lord's true people of every age and name. In that same wilderness appears (ch. 17: 3-6) another woman, evidently assuming the character of that celestial fugitive whose flight thither had before been represented on the Apocalyptic scene. We have refused to give to this sinister appearance the name "church," with any manner of qualifying epithet. We do not believe "the Church of the living God" ever was, or ever could be, "apostate." There was a church in the wilderness during those ages of darkness and suffering; but this woman upon the seven-headed beast, drunk with the blood of saints, was not that church. They, rather, who suffered at her hands, whose blood she drank, represented that church—a fugitive church, "persecuted" by "the dragon," who casts out of his mouth floods of worldly confusion and turbulence, "that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood"; yet with her "two wings of a great eagle" flying away to the "place prepared of God" where she is "nourished," as Elijah was in his own wilderness. The woman, "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" is not *this* woman, yet she pretends to be, and persuades many that she is; so much so, indeed, that even yet sincere persons find it difficult to distinguish between them. Who can this woman be, this sorcerer and harlot, if not the so-called Church of Rome? This is the Babylon of chapter 17: 5, and the Babylon, also, of chapter 18: 2. "The woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The criminal association of the woman with "the kings of the earth," and her "reigning over them," find historical parallels in what is recorded of papal Rome during all the centuries of its disastrous supremacy. She was their mistress in a double sense: she ruled them, and at the same time wantoned with them. Her conduct was perfectly that of the heartless courtesan, by turns arrogant and seductive; now training her lovers after her by every manner of seductive wile, and now making them the victims of her termagant

abuse, or of her capricious exactions. The subserviency of kings to popes, during those centuries, was only equaled by the corrupt terms upon which their alliances were framed, and the utterly unprincipled ways in which pope and king conspired against every interest of humanity and of religion. Dark chapters in history, indeed, are they in which these things are chronicled. Like to this in its significance is the imagery of our present chapter. The seductive woman and the luxurious city, filling her markets with the costly products of every zone, and through her extravagance and her lavish self-indulgence both exciting and gratifying the spirit of a covetous commerce—these answer to each other in every way. Both alike represent the pernicious influences that went abroad over the world from the papal centre, and illustrate the mischiefs of a system in which the worst of ends were sought by the worst of means.

That *final* destruction of Babylon, of which this chapter contains such a vivid description, must be still future. The premonitions of it, however, already appear; indeed, the progressive fulfillment is taking place before our eyes. We must not be misled by any impression that what is Apocalyptically represented as *sudden*, is sudden in the same way that things are so to us. With the Lord "a thousand years are as one day." Babylon really "fell," when about the beginning of the sixteenth century, such a tremendous defection occurred as we have already noticed; her adherents forsaking her by whole kingdoms at a time. Within the life-time of a man, the enormous despotism which shadowed Europe from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, and from the Atlantic to the Russian border, was reduced to such extremities, that only desperate expedients saved it from utter overthrow. Indeed, the parallel between this system of corrupt ecclesiasticism, and a great, luxurious and wicked city, brought by its own excesses to a condition where all its greatness is mere hollowness and show, was perfect. To this Bellarmine, himself a Romanist writer, in effect testifies. "For some years," he says, "before Lutheran and Calvinistic heresies were published, there was not (as contemporary authors testify) any severity in ecclesiastical judicatories, any discipline with regard to morals, any knowledge of sacred literature, any reverence for divine things: *There was not almost any religion remaining.*" (Quoted by Robertson, in his *History of Charles the Fifth*). A system whose claim to the reverence and obedience of mankind is in its *spiritual* character, holds a most absurd position, when it insists upon that claim while there is in it "not almost any religion remaining." Thenceforth its appeal must be to the superstition of the ignorant, or the interest of the worldly and unprincipled. It was a fact fatal to Romanism that these two classes by no means embraced the whole of mankind; that there was enough of religious earnestness left to test thoroughly the claim to embody in itself the whole of Christianity of a system out of which, by the confession of its own most intelligent champions, whatever of Christianity it may once have possessed, had almost wholly departed. So it came to pass that, in the first onset of the Reformation, it seemed as if this showy and pretentious, yet rotten and hollow system of hierarchical despotism was on the point of being crushed. "The victory of Protestantism," says Macaulay, "was rapid and decisive. . . . About half a century after the great separation, there were throughout the North [of Europe] Protestant governments and Protestant nations." (*Essay on "Ranke's History of the Popes"*). From this well-nigh annihilating blow Rome has really never recovered. The measures of Pius V., a ruthless and resolute man, who set himself with determined purpose, and with all the art and craft of a true Italian, to stem the tide of defeat, and change the fortunes of the field; the co-operation with him of Philip II., of Spain, and of the Guises and Lorraines in France; the institution of the Order of the Jesuits, and the founding of the Inquisition—by such measures and instruments as these a reaction was effected, and some of the ground lost seemed for a time recovered. But as we look back over the history of those centuries, we perceive in the Papacy, as shown in another like connection, not a power with vitality unimpaired, standing up resolutely and successfully against formidable assaults; but a power doomed and already defeated, desperately rallying its shattered strength in a struggle already hopeless, and by its furious efforts only hastening its own destruction. The Inquisition was long a terror; but it was far more a reproach to

CHAPTER XIX.

AND after these things [a]I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; [b]Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2 For [c]true and righteous *are* his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and [d]hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

1 AFTER these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to
2 our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, who did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged

a ch. 11: 15....b ch. 4: 11; 7: 10, 12; 12: 10....c ch. 15: 3; 16: 7....d Deut. 32: 43; ch. 6: 10; 18: 20.

the system in whose support an instrument so hideous could be used, and has in the end wrought far more mischief to the power that employed it, than to that against which it was used. The Jesuits have served the evil cause to which they devoted themselves, body and soul, with most extraordinary fidelity; but they have, time after time, made themselves so intolerable by their unprincipled courses, as that Roman Catholic princes and republics have been compelled to cast them out as a menace and a disgrace. The persistency with which the popes themselves have clung to those pretensions which, even in such a time as that of the middle ages they found it difficult to enforce, assuming, even in this nineteenth century, to be supreme over all governments, and to have a right to rule alike the counsels and the consciences of rulers and peoples; the measures adopted by them, or under their direction, such as the proclamation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility by the Vatican Council of 1869-70, attempting thus to force upon an age of enlightenment and free thought, doctrines which not even mediæval subserviency would accept—in all these ways, Popery has, by its struggles for self recovery, simply been making more complete and hopeless its actual downfall.

There is a prophecy in these things, themselves. They presage for the Roman hierarchy a complete and final overthrow. How far in the future this ultimate event may lie, no one of us can say; but that it is sure to come, the signs of the present time unite with Apocalyptic testimony in declaring.

THE HEAVENLY TRIUMPH.

1-4. A SONG OF DELIVERANCE.

1. And after these things. "And" is rightly omitted.—**I heard a great voice of much people in heaven.** Alford says, upon this: "As each of the great events and judgments of the book is celebrated by its song of praise in heaven, so this also; but more solemnly and formally than the others, seeing that this is the great accomplishment of God's judgment on the enemy of his church." He then instances, as examples of heavenly praise on like occasions, ch. 4: 8-11, "introducing the whole heavenly scenery"; ch. 5: 9-14, "celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to open the book"; chs. 7: 10-12; 11: 15-18, "on the close fulfillment of God's judgments at the sounding of the seventh trumpet"; ch. 15: 3, "on the introduction of the series of the vials"; and ch. 16: 5, "on the retributive justice shown in the pouring out of the third vial." A like song of praise now celebrates the deliverance experienced in the doom visited upon Babylon. The amended Greek text of the words quoted above would read, "*as it were* (ὡς) a great voice."—**Saying, Alleluia: salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.** The amended reading omits the words "honor" and "the Lord." In the amended text, also, following the Sinaitic and Alexandrine manuscripts, instead of "unto our God" (τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν), we find "of our God" (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν). The form differs, therefore, from what we have, for example, in 7: 12, where "unto our God" is the rendering of the best Greek. Here it is "of our God," or "are our God's," meaning that these terms of praise, "salvation," "glory," "power," are his, not ours; or, as the revisers give it, "belong to our God." The whole work of deliverance being wrought by his power, the praise and the glory of it are his.

2. For true and righteous are his judgments. To holy beings, and also to beings regenerated and redeemed, God's truth and righteousness are supreme occasions of rejoicing praise. On these, as on eternal foundations, the stability of the moral universe and the fidelity of all moral beings must forever depend. In that which is the immediate occasion of this song of praise, they are illus-

3 And again they said, Allelulia. And [a] her smoke rose up for ever and ever.
4 And [b] the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, [c] Amen: Alleluia.
5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, [d] Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, [e] both small and great.

3 the blood of his servants at her hand. And a second time they [1] say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth 4 up [2] for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, 5 Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great.

a Isa. 34: 10; ch. 14: 11; 18: 9, 18....b ch. 4: 4, 6, 10; 5: 14....c 1 Chron. 16: 36; Neh. 5: 13; 8: 6; ch. 5: 14....d Ps. 134: 1; 135: 1....e ch. 11: 18; 20: 12.——1 Gr. *have said*....2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

trated anew.—**For he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornications, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.** The theme of this great song "of much people in heaven" is therefore the final overthrow and destruction of that evil power which during so many centuries had made the earth the scene of its ravages. This is, then, a song celebrating the world's deliverance from that power. As the "harlot" is specifically named, we must understand the reference to be to that form of the antichristian manifestation which is described in the two immediately preceding chapters. The "beast" and "the false prophet," other forms of the same manifestation, are mentioned, and their fall described in ver. 20, below.

3. And again [*the second time*] **they said, Alleluia.** "This last 'Alleluia,'" says Carpenter, "clearly belongs to the song, or chorus. It is separated from the body of it by the descriptive words, 'And again they said.'" He arranges thus:

Alleluia!
The salvation, and the glory, and the power
Are our God's,
Because true and righteous are his judgments;
Because he judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication,
And avenged the blood of his servants out of her hand.
Alleluia.

—And her smoke rose up forever and ever. The imagery here rests upon that of chapter eighteen, in which Babylon appears as a city. The picture it presents is that of such a city, not only in ruins, but smoking, as a vast funeral pile. It is an "eternal burning"; in other words, the ruin is final. It is not as when the flames of a burnt city at last die down, and men clear away the charred timbers and the blackened stones, preparatory to a rebuilding. It is, rather, as if the flames were never to lack fuel, but forever burn on, making all restoration and rebuilding eternally impossible. So with great Babylon. So with that power which for so long a time corrupted the world with its sorceries, oppressed the church, and wore out the saints of the Most High.

4. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts [*living creatures*] **fell down and worshipped God that sat** [*sitteth*] **on the throne, saying, Amen: Alleluia.** By the "much people" in ver. 1, must be understood the great body of those who are subjects of this deliverance—who have suffered at the hand of the power now brought to its final overthrow, and in their song celebrate that great event. "The four and twenty elders" appear as the representatives of this body of redeemed ones in that permanent symbolism which so frequently re-appears in the successive visions. "The four living creatures," as before explained, represent that "creation" which "groaneth and travaileth in pain together," waiting for the final "adoption, to wit, the redemption" of God's elect people. Both of these unite in the same song of deliverance with their melodious "Amen" and their responsive "Alleluia."

5-8. A HEAVENLY CHORUS.

5. And a voice came out of the throne, ("*forth from* the throne" is better), **saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, small and great.** The language used, in this call to praise, shows that the voice, though it came from the throne, cannot have been the voice of God. It is not a divine being, evidently, who says: "Praise *our God.*" Perhaps the expression "forth from the throne," is not to be taken too literally. The *Speaker's Commentary* understands the preposition "from" (ἀπὸ), as "denoting *direction* merely, not the *source* of the voice." Hengstenberg, quite incorrectly, understands the voice as of "him that sitteth on the throne," and supposes, strangely enough, that this is Christ. The *Speaker's Commentary* notes that Christ nowhere employs the expression, "*our God.*" In John 20: 17, he says, "my God," and adds: "and your God." The form of expression implies,

6 [a] And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelulia: for [b] the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for [c] the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for
7 the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is

a Ezek. 1: 24; 43: 2; ch. 14: 2....b ch. 11: 15, 17; 12: 10; 21: 22....c Matt. 22: 2; 25: 10; 2 Cor. 11: 2; Ephes. 5: 32; ch. 21: 2, 9.

there, that the Father is his God in a sense different from that in which he is "*our* God." For him to use the latter phrase would be to make himself human. This he never does, in any other sense than as the God-man. Bengel thinks the voice is that of the four living creatures. Düsterdieck thinks it the voice of the elders. Clearly, the source of the voice is purposely left without indication. Carpenter understands it simply as coming "from the direction of the throne," and thinks it "better to leave it indefinite." What the voice utters is a call to universal praise, responsive to the song of deliverance just sung by those in whose behalf this deliverance has been wrought. "All" the "servants" of God are summoned to join in this responsive chorus; all that "fear him, both small and great." The call embraces the universe of holy and regenerated being.

6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings [*thunders*]. The description is accumulative, advancing to a climax. Or, perhaps, we may say that the chorus itself swells from a sound like that of the blended voices of a great multitude, to such as is heard in the roar of seas, and at last in the tremendous peal on peal of "mighty thunders." Thus is represented to us the interest all heaven feels in the triumphs of God's Kingdom on earth, and those deliverances which come in the victories of his grace and providence.—**Saying, Allelulia, for the Lord God** [*the Lord our God*] **omnipotent** [*the Almighty*] **reigneth.** This cannot be simply a general acknowledgment that God reigns. It is a thankful and joyful recognition of his sovereignty called forth by recent events, in which the fact has found signal illustration. The assertion and vindication of his supremacy in the events just described, culminating in the downfall of Babylon—this it is that inspires the rapturous and triumphant song. So long the victory of truth and righteousness seemed delayed; so long the blood of the martyrs cried to heaven, to all appearance, in vain; so long the wicked triumphed, might prevailed over right, evil and wrong and error seemed to carry all before them; while as each crisis came and the vindication still tarried, deriding voices cried: "Where is now their God?"—when at last the omnipotent arm is reached forth, and it is seen that it is God himself who after all reigns—it is for the entire universe of holy being an hour of triumph worthy of celebration in songs that fill heaven. The Greek word here used (ἐβασίλευσεν) literally translated, would read: "hath become king," [or, "reigneth as king," *i. e.*, showed his kingship, his kingly power which had seemed to be in abeyance.—A. H.] It may be that in the form of the expression, the fact of this exertion of sovereign power is emphasized.

7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. We are approaching, now, some of those questions, touching "the last things," upon which the Christian world is so much divided, and concerning which positive conclusions are so difficult, perhaps impossible, of realization. Our own aim will be to keep close to the text, seeking by careful study of the words written, in themselves and in their connection, to find the meaning of what is thus set down. What, then, is meant by "the marriage of the Lamb"? The general representation of the intimate and tender relation of Christ with his saved people, under the figure of marriage, is made familiar to us by its frequent use, alike in the Old Testament, and in the New. We may instance in the Old Testament that beautiful pastoral, "Solomon's Song," and in the New Testament, the marriage of the king's son in Matt. 22: 2–14, and the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. 25: 1–13. A significant passage is that in Eph. 5: 22–32, where Paul bases on this analogy important teachings as to the Christian law of marriage itself. In all these places, save one, the idea of the marriage of Christ with his church is that of a relation

3 And [a] to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: [b] for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

8 come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright *and* pure: for the fine linen is the

a Ps. 45 : 13, 14; Ezek. 16 : 10; ch. 3 : 18....b Ps. 132 : 9.

already formed, not of one yet future; the plain implication is that Christ, in the very fact of his progressive redeeming work, puts himself in this relation with his people, they being viewed, in the imagery thus employed, in the oneness of their fellowship as *a people*, and not so much as individuals. In one of the places noted above, however, the parable of the virgins, the thought seems to be carried forward to the end of the Dispensation. A difference in phraseology, suggestive of this, may be noticed. In Matt. 22: 2, describing the marriage of the king's son, we read, "The kingdom of heaven *is likened*"—the meaning seeming to be that such as the parable illustrates is the kingdom of heaven in its present and progressive character. In the parable of the virgins we read, "The kingdom of heaven shall *then* be likened"—implying that at the time of what is mentioned in chapter twenty-four, the coming of the Lord to take account of his servants as to the use made of the talents committed to them, that which is now described, namely, likeness, not to the marriage, but to the coming of the bridegroom to receive his bride, and to the marriage supper, *shall be* true of the kingdom of heaven. It seems clear, therefore, that the marriage of the Lamb is presented to us under two distinct aspects: (1) that of the original institution of this relation between Christ and his redeemed people; and (2) that of the consummation of this relation at the end of that long period of trial and ordeal during which his elect are gathered out of the nations of men, and when the hour of triumph for him and for them at last comes. In other words, the distinction is between the *marriage* (or betrothal, in that age equivalent to marriage), and the *marriage supper* (the final and consummating ceremonial). Consistently with this distinction, the word in the Greek, in the verse now studied (ἦλθεν), which in both our versions is translated, "is come," is really in a past tense, and would be rendered, literally, "*came*"—"the marriage of the Lamb came"—apparently pointing to what has already taken place. In ver. 9, below, we read, "Blessed are they which *are bidden* to the *marriage supper* of the Lamb." This indicates something to occur at the time when this prophecy shall be fulfilled. Between the marriage, in Jewish customs (or betrothal, equivalent to marriage, as we have said), a considerable interval occurred. It was at "the marriage supper" that the bridegroom received full possession of his bride. This supper occurred at the bridegroom's own house, to which the bride was conducted in festal procession, and with great rejoicing. Keeping all this in mind, we may the more clearly see the exact force of the words before us. At the time to which we are now brought down in the progress of Apocalyptic disclosure of things then to come, "the marriage of the Lamb," the betrothal, the gathering of his elect, has been fully accomplished; and the time for "the marriage supper" has arrived.—**And his wife hath made herself ready.** Abbott, in his commentary upon Matt. 25: 1–13, says: "The betrothal was itself a much more solemn act than with us, and was often accompanied by a public ceremonial. [It was made a festal occasion, as Matt. 22: 2–14 implies.] Usually a period of twelve months intervened between the betrothal and the wedding ceremony, during which time the bride-elect continued to live with her friends, and all communications between herself and the bridegroom were carried on through the medium of a 'friend of the bridegroom' (John 3: 29). . . . The essential feature in the wedding ceremony consisted in taking the bride to her future husband's home. Throughout the day preceding this ceremony, both parties fasted, confessing their sins, and seeking forgiveness. It is thought, also, that the bride prepared herself for the wedding ceremony by a bath, taken, as it certainly is in modern times, with some pomp, and as an important part in her share of the wedding ceremonial (Ruth 3: 3; Ezek. 23: 40; Eph. 5: 26, 27)." In the imagery of our present passage, the words, "and his wife hath made herself ready," indicate that the interval between the betrothal and the bringing home of the bride is past, and the time come for the public ceremonial of the marriage—the bride has prepared herself for the marriage ceremony.

8. And to her was granted that she

9 And he saith unto me, Write, [a] Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, [b] These are the true sayings of God.

9 righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me

[a] Matt. 22 : 2, 3 ; Luke 14 : 15, 16....[b] ch. 21 : 5 ; 22 : 6.

should be arrayed [*should array herself*] **in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.** The rendering, "bright and pure," in the revision, is preferable. The substitution will also be noticed of "righteous acts of the saints," for "righteousness of saints." Lange and Carpenter prefer "righteousnesses of the saints"; and the former comments: "The Greek word for righteousness in this place (δικαίωμα, here used in the plural, δικαιώματα), is always a means by which justice is satisfied, or acquittal is obtained, whether it be by the performance of the right, or the expiation of the wrong (by undergoing punishment), or atonement, as the concrete unity of the doing and the suffering of that which is right." It is the same word which Paul uses in the Epistle to the Romans (as in 5 : 16), to express his idea of justification. "The source of these righteousnesses," says the note in Ellicott, "is divine; it is given her to be so arrayed. It is no fictitious righteousness; it is real, though it never would have been her's but for him without whom she can do nothing (cf. John 15 : 4, 5 ; Phil. 3 : 8-10)." The translation "righteousnesses" is perhaps preferable to "righteous acts," although it is difficult to render the Greek term by any single English word. The latter—"righteous acts"—might appear to imply that the acceptance which the saints enjoyed is occasioned by meritorious deeds of their own, which the Greek word does not ordinarily imply; whereas, not only are they "accepted in the Beloved," but their bright and pure array is here expressly said to be "given" them. The word "righteousness," with its far wider meaning, while it more accurately represents the Greek, comprehends alike that "righteousness" of the saints, "which is offered by faith," and besides, all that in character and life which has testified to the genuineness of the faith. We agree with Carpenter, that the song closes with the words, "hath made herself ready." The eighth verse, now under consideration, is explanatory, and the words of John himself. The contrasted adornment of the bride and of the harlot should be noticed. In the array of the latter were all manner of meretricious splendors; that of the former is simple, but "bright and pure"—as Grotius says: "the grave attire of the matron, not the gaudy splendor of the harlot." By these tokens is the true church known from the false, even now; much more will it be so then.

9. And he saith unto me. Who is it that speaks? A question not easily answered. Some expositors recall ch. 1 : 1, where it is said that this "Revelation" was "signified unto John" by his [*God's*] angel." They suppose that this *angelus interpres*, "interpreting angel," is present with John, throughout, that the "great voice, as of a trumpet," spoken of in 1 : 10, was the voice of this angel, and that his presence with the seer is to be everywhere assumed. They think that in the verse now considered, the words, "he said unto me," are an abrupt mention of the same interpreting angel—an abruptness to be explained, like other peculiarities of the book, by its character as a vision, the conditions being all abnormal, such as the very nature of a vision presupposes. Others think—and this is the view of such as Bengel, De Wette, Hengstenberg, Düsterdieck, Alford, and Carpenter—that the angel here is the same as the angel mentioned in ch. 17 : 1: "One of the angels which had the seven vials." Lange takes it to be the angel mentioned in 18 : 21. the "mighty angel" with the millstone. There is a significant passage at ch. 22 : 8, where we read: "And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel *which showed me these things.*" In ver. 10 of the present chapter a like thing is said, and here, as in 22 : 9, John is forbidden to render this act of worship to a "fellow-servant." The similarity of the two passages suggests that the "angel" in each is identical with the angel in the other, while the manner in which the mention of him in each is introduced suggests a probability that in both it is the angel-interpreter of whom we read, as noted above, in the very opening of the book. We incline, on our own part, to

10 And [a]I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, [b]See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren [c]that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

10 These are true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

a ch. 22:8....b Acts 10:26; 14:14, 15; ch. 22:9....c 1 John 5:10; ch. 12:17.

this view, although the point seems incapable of positive determination. If we adopt it, we must make one other important distinction between this angel and the various other angelic appearances, which are appearances merely, belonging in each case to the scenery of the vision. This angel is a real one, and acts and speaks as such.—**Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.** This is equivalent to saying, "Blessed are they who in the consummation are found among the elect ones, the finally saved." Commentators note six of these "benedictions of the Apocalypse," as they are called, chs. 1:3; 14:13; 20:6; 22:7, 14—the present one completing the six. "We must not," says Carpenter, "draw too sharp distinctions between the bride and the guests; the imagery is varied to give fullness and force to the truths which no emblems can adequately express." If any such distinction were made, it would be between the church, the whole body of the redeemed, as such, and the same redeemed company as individuals; in the former case, the imagery presents them as the bride, in the latter, as the guests.—**And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings** [*words*] **of God.** A solemn confirmation of the truth and certainty of the things here and thus made known.

10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. An act to which he is moved, not unnaturally, by the heavenly splendor in which the angel appears to him, and by the wonderfulness and blessedness of the things disclosed. The worship seems to be prompted by a feeling that this being must be himself divine. Other angelic appearances John seems to have recognized as angelic simply. In the present case, his wonder and gratitude are such that only an act of worship, as to one believed to be divine, can adequately express what he feels.—**And he said unto me, See thou do it not.** Literally, "*see, not*," "*take heed, not*"; the words: "*thou do it*," being supplied.—**I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.** The rendering in the revised version is less ambiguous: "I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren." In the common version, a hasty reader might understand the words as being: "I am one of thy fellow-servants and one of thy brethren," and from this infer that the "angel" is in fact a redeemed human spirit, sent to John upon this errand as the Apocalyptic interpreter. This is the view taken by such commentators as Eichhorn and Züllig. The meaning is, really, that the angel is John's fellow-servant, and a fellow-servant of all those who "have the testimony of Jesus." In the parallel passage (22:9) the words are: "them which keep the sayings of this book." The *Speaker's Commentary*, accordingly, appears to prefer the rendering here, "which *hold* the testimony of Jesus." By "the testimony of Jesus" must be understood testimony *to* him and *for* him; full and open recognition of him in his exalted being and office, and a witnessing ministry in that behalf. The words teach that angels, like men, see in Jesus the divine Redeemer of the world, and that—in their own sphere of instrumentality—they have a share with redeemed men themselves, in that ministry through which he is in this character preached "in all the world."—**Worship God.** The only proper object of worship.—**For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** We incline to the opinion that the word "prophecy," here, is to be taken in its large sense—chiefly, indeed, implying what is usually meant by the word; but embracing every form of *inspired* utterance. What the angel says, therefore, is that to testify to and for Jesus, is the mission of all those who, in the communications of God to men, serve as the instruments of his revelations. It is true of angels, as it is true of inspired men, and of uninspired men who have this "testimony of Jesus." So central in the whole scheme of divine revelation, as in the whole system of divine provision, are the person and work of Jesus, that, whether expressly or not, all that is spoken in revelation,

11 [a]And I saw heaven opened, and behold [b]a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called [c]Faithful and True, and [d]in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon, [1]called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make

a ch. 15:5....*b* ch. 6:2....*c* ch. 3:14....*d* Isa. 11:4.——1 Some ancient authorities omit, *called*.

or proffered in promise, centres also in him. To "preach Jesus" is, in so far as service in the Kingdom of God on earth is concerned, the mission, alike of men and of angels, Even the prophets of the Old Testament were moved by "the Spirit of Christ which was in them" (1 Pet. 1:11). The exact force of the connecting particle "for" is somewhat obscure. Are the words,: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," a reason given why he should "worship God"? Or is the immediate antecedent to this clause to be found earlier in the verse? The latter seems the more probable. After the injunction, "Worship God," the angel returns to the point stated at the beginning of the verse, and shows how a common service of witnessing for Jesus places angels and men upon one level as fellow-servants, so that the man is not to worship the angel any more than the angel the man. Both alike must "worship God." The words, however, are capable of expansion beyond the application made of them here, and may be regarded as intended, as well, to show how "the testimony of Jesus" is the organizing principle in all revelation.

11-16. The Conquering Word.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. The words "I saw heaven opened" may be put in relation with those at the beginning of this chapter—"After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven." Those uniting in this chorus of praise appear to have been invisible to John. They were "in heaven," in the sense of being apart from the immediate scene of these visions, while their voices came to the hearer of them as if from behind a veil, beyond which lay the regions of the blest. That veil now parts, "heaven opens," and the white horse with his rider once more is seen. For the white horse "and him that sat upon him" have appeared upon the scene of a former vision. At the opening of the first seal (ch. 6:1, 2), "I saw," says John, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer." This opening of the first seal was the initiatory act in the revelations, which, in successive chapters, we have been studying. The white horse and his rider were first of the striking figures that have appeared on the scene, taking part in successive acts of the Apocalyptic drama. And now, after so much has intervened, covering centuries of time and a vast tract of human history, we see them again. Their first appearance signalized an era; it represented the opening of the Christian Dispensation. The white horse symbolized alike the character of him who rode and the spirit and aims of that conquering career in which he was riding forth; the crown indicated dominion, and the bow the nature of the warfare by which he was to conquer. Our exposition at that place shows how, under these impressive symbols, the opening, triumphant era of the Christian Dispensation is set forth. The striking similarity between what is now before us and that which was thus seen at the beginning of these disclosures, suggests that between the *occasion* of the one of those and that of the other there must be a like semblance. That was an era in the history of God's spiritual kingdom among men; so also must this be. In the former case, however, the rider of the white horse is not named. Here the name is given him, "Faithful and True." It is a name most significant; significant especially of this, that the promises by which faith and hope have, during so many centuries of trying vicissitude been sustained, are now on the eve of fulfillment; that the time has come when it will be shown how, of all the good things which the Lord had spoken, not one has failed; but all came to pass (Josh. 21:45). This is he who at the beginning rode forth crowned and conquering. They who, age after age, have submitted to his reign, have enlisted under his banner, have fought and suffered and died in his cause, shall now find that, however it may have seemed in ages of gloom and trial, the final triumph and the great reward were never for a moment in

12 [a]His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, [b]and on his head *were* many crowns; [c]and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
13 [d]And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called [e]The Word of God.

12 war. And his eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon his head *are* many diadems; and he hath a name writ-
13 ten, which no one knoweth but he himself. And he *is* arrayed in a garment [1]sprinkled with blood: and

a ch. 1:14; 2:18....*b* ch. 6:2....*c* ch. 2:17; ver. 16....*d* Isa. 63:2, 3....*e* John 1:1; 1 John 5:7.——1 Some ancient authorities read, *dipped in.*

doubt. He whom they have followed is "Faithful and True."—**And in righteousness he doth judge and make war.** His cause is the righteous cause. He makes war only on that which deserves destruction, and he arraigns and judges only those who are criminals as well as enemies. More especially does this become true as we see that the enemy he makes war upon is Antichrist himself.

12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. The "eyes as a flame of fire" remind us of him who appeared to John at the first (ch. 1:14). The "crowns" or diadems are indicative of dominion. That they are "many" indicates the completeness of that dominion which he has won. Upon his former appearance we simply read that "there was a crown given unto him." Here there are *many* crowns. The ultimate dominion there foreshadowed is here completely achieved; it is the result of conquest, and in it "*all* might and all dominion" are subdued and made subject.—**And he had a name written, that no man knew** ["*no man knoweth*"] **but he himself.** He has already been called by one name, "Faithful and True." A little further on we are told of another name which he bears, "The Word of God"; and still again, that on his vesture and on his thigh there was the even more august name, "King of kings and Lord of lords." But here we have mention of a name which "no man [*no one*] knoweth but he himself." Beyond and within all that is communicable of the being and person of him who thus appears, there is the incommunicable and the inscrutable. What he is in his relation to his own people, as the faithful and true one; what he is as the summary and the fullness of all divine revelation, the Logos, the Word of God; what he is in his relation to the world, the King of its kings, the Lord of its lords, exercising over all mastery and all dominion a dominion and a mastery infinitely superior and supreme—this can be in a measure understood. But who has ever penetrated beyond these, so as to know him as he is in his essential being? There is a name belonging to him which has never yet been revealed to created intelligence. The question where the name was written, which some commentators discuss, cannot be answered, and need not be. Is this, then, the "new name," mentioned in ch. 3:12: "I will write upon him [*upon him who overcomes*] my new name." We think it doubtful. The name there does not seem to be a name which no one knoweth. Do not they upon whom it is written know? It is, besides, more in accordance with the whole spirit of the imagery, here, to take this mysterious name as a symbol of the mysterious and wonderful nature of him who bears it, and as showing that back of all *manifestation* in the person of our Lord, there is that which entitles him to the name given him by a prophet of the Old Dispensation—"The Wonderful."

13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. The revision, it will be noticed, renders: "a garment sprinkled with blood."* Is this blood the blood of his enemies, or his own blood, "shed for many, for the remission of sins"? The former seems the more likely view, as we consult the parallel passage, as also the connection here. The Old Testament basis of the imagery used is understood to be the passage in Isa. 63:1-3,

*The Greek word in the Sinaitic text, preferred by Tischendorf, is "sprinkled about," "be sprinkled," (*περιρεραμμένον*, from *περιραίνω*), instead of "dipped" (*βεβαμμένον*, from *βάπτω*), as in the text followed by the common version. Westcott and Hort, whose text with the word for "sprinkled" (*ῥεραντισμένον*), the revision follows, after referring to manuscript authority, say: "The versions are somewhat ambiguous; but all the Latins have *sparsam, aspersam,* or *conspersam,* all of which readings point to *ῥαίνω,* or *ῥαντίζω,* [*to sprinkle*] or one of their compounds, rather than *βάπτω,* [*to dip.*] A word denoting sprinkling seems also to agree best with the context, and with Biblical symbolism generally; see especially Isa. 63:3, where *ἐρραντίσθη* [from *ῥαντίζω to sprinkle*], or according to some MSS. *ἐρράνθη,* [from *ῥαίνω,* also meaning *to sprinkle*], is used by Aquila and Symmachus." [Notes on Select Readings, Vol. II., pp. 140]. Düsterdieck, Lange, Alford, and Carpenter, retain (*βεβαμμένον*), "dipped." The *Speaker's Commentary* appears to prefer the other.

14 [a]And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, [b]clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
15 And [c]out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and [d]he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and [e]he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

14 his name is called The Word of God. And the armies that are in heaven followed him upon white
15 horses, clothed in fine linen, white *and* pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the [1]winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God,

a ch. 14: 20....b Matt. 28: 3; ch. 4: 4; 7: 9....c Isa. 11: 4; 2 Thess. 2: 8; ch. 1: 16; ver. 21....d Ps. 2: 9; ch. 2: 27; 12: 5....e Isa. 63: 3; ch. 14: 19, 20. —1 Gr. *winepress of the wine of the fierceness.*

especially the third verse, where the glorious person described appears as saying: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled on all my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." In the connection of our present passage, we find the words: "And he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." It would seem, then, that the allusion in the mention of blood is not to our Lord's redeeming work; but to that work of judgment, in which he visits with final overthrow all the opponents of his triumphing kingdom of grace.—**And his name is called the Word of God.** It is John alone, of New Testament writers, who speaks of Jesus as the Word (Λόγος). We are reminded, as we read what he says here, of the sublime words with which he begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Such is he who now appears in vision to the same apostle.

14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses. Those who think that the vision here described is a picture of our Lord coming forth in the final judgment, understand by the "armies," armies of angels. They quote Matt. 25: 31—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him"—as a parallel passage. The description, however, of the "great white throne," in Rev. 20: 11, is much more in correspondence with these words from Matthew. Besides, the connection of our passage shows that it is not to the final judgment of the world that he upon the white horse comes, but for the final overthrow and destruction of Antichrist. And this is wrought by means like those which are used in the whole progress of his kingdom. That angels have a share in the work that goes forward under the Gospel Dispensation — in the conflict where fierce collisions occur, and in the more peaceful toil of the more peaceful times—we do not doubt. We do not, nevertheless, understand angels to be meant here, in speaking of "the armies of heaven." In truth, the words, in ch. 17: 14, seem to be used in anticipation of what we have in this place, and to be conclusive on the point we are considering: "These"—the ten horns of the beast—"shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings"—the same title given to him in our present text—"and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." These terms of description apply alone to his own saved people, and it must be of such as these that these "armies of heaven" are composed. It is not to be forgotten, either, that what we are studying, here, is imagery the same in general character as has occupied us throughout the book. When the rider and his horse appear at the opening of the Christian Dispensation, the symbols used represent simply the conquering power and effect of the gospel itself. In a like way, what we are now studying is just a vivid picture of the overmastering efficiency of Christian instrumentality accompanied by special and unusual exertions of divine power, and by striking interpositions of providence, and thus made "mighty through God to the pulling down of" the last of the enemy's "strongholds." It is the final glorious victory of truth and righteousness upon the same field where they are now contending.—**Clothed in fine linen, white and clean.** "*White, pure.*" It has already been explained that this "fine linen" is, "the righteousnesses of the saints"; its mention here shows again, and conclusively, who these are that compose "the armies of heaven."

15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword. Symbolizing the fact that it is "the word of the Lord," the gospel, that is to achieve final victory. — **That with it he should smite the nations.** Smite them with conviction, overcome all forms of opposition, silence infidelity, and cover with confusion those who remain obdurate to the

16 And [a]he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, [b]KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying [c]to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, [d]Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;
18 [e]That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, *both* free and bond, both small and great.

16 the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
17 And I saw [1]an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come *and* be gathered together
18 unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of [2]captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

a ver. 12....b Dan. 2:47; 1 Tim. 6:15; ch. 17:14....c ver. 21....d Ezek. 39:17....e Ezek. 39:18, 20.—1 Gr. *one*....2 Or, *military tribunes*; Gr. *chiliarchs*.

last.—**And he shall rule them with a rod of iron.**—Fulfilling the prophecy and promise of the Second Psalm: "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen [*the nations*] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." By this, as well as by what we have in the text studied, is meant all in the nations that is in opposition to Christ's kingdom. Every form of such opposition will be completely overcome. The shepherd's staff with which our Lord rules and leads his people becomes a rod of iron when used against his enemies. —**And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.** This intense imagery and language must simply teach us how final and how severe will be God's judgment upon the evil of the world. And yet, in the destruction of evil they must suffer who have been its upholders. It is as when the pillars of the Dagon temple gave way under the mighty strain while Samson "bowed himself with all his might," and in the fall the mocking onlookers were crushed. The judgments of God, even upon the wicked and the finally obdurate, are not arbitrary. It is the evil of the world that kindles the divine wrath to "fierceness"; yet when, in the overthrow of evil, they who are on its side are crushed, it is what every principle of justice and right makes inevitable. The figure of the "wine-press" is an evident allusion to the passage in Isaiah before quoted.

16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. The name "Faithful and True" describes him in his relations with his redeemed ones. "The Word of God" as the medium, and, at the same time, the substance, of that revealed truth through which all the aims of this Dispensation are achieved. "King of kings and Lord of lords" as supreme even in the dominion of the world—holding and, in due time, effectually asserting a supremacy which even the proudest and mightiest must acknowledge.

17-21. FINAL DOOM OF ANTICHRIST.

17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun. We still are to remember, as we proceed now to the striking passage which follows, that we are dealing with vision and with imagery. Many writers explain the position of the angel, in the sun, as enabling him best to "call to the birds." Others think that the sun is spoken of here symbolically, "as revelation," and the angel holds his position there as announcing what revelation makes known of the approaching doom of Antichrist. We incline to take it simply as one part of the scenery of the vision; or, if more is imported, that this is, that a position thus central and commanding was most suitable for the herald of such events as are now at hand.—**And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls** [*birds*] **that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God.** "The armies of heaven" with their mighty leader have been seen riding forth. Against whom they march is shown in ver. 19, below. It is "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies." What the result of the conflict will be is announced in this summons of the angel. The imagery is predicated upon the fact that to the field of a battle, after the deadly struggle is over, birds of prey were wont to flock. The words, "the supper of the great God," are taken by some as presenting a picture in contrast with "the marriage supper of the Lamb." This is perhaps a straining of the imagery. We prefer to take the words just as a vivid setting forth of the divine participation, in purpose and act, in these final events.

18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings,

19 a And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.
20 b And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and c them that worshipped his image. d These bothwere cast alive into a lake of fire e burning with brimstone.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his
20 army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of

a ch. 16:16; 17:13, 14....b ch. 16:13, 14....c ch. 13:12, 15....d ch. :10. See Dan. 7:11....e ch. 14:10; 21:8.

and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. This is simply carrying out the imagery of the whole passage. The picture is of a great battle, which results in the absolute annihilation of the enemy. The kings, the captains, the great warriors, soldiery of every grade and class, "bond and free, small and great," lie slaughtered on the field. This result of the struggle is announced by anticipation, in the summons of the angel.

19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. What had been thus anticipated and announced, is now to take place.

20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him. "*That wrought the signs in his sight*," or, "in his *presence*," is better. By "the beast," we still understand Antichrist, in the general sense as that antichristian *principle*, or force, which has survived during so many ages, and under so many forms. "The false prophet" is to a certain extent identified with the second beast, or corrupt ecclesiasticism; but it includes falseness in religion of every kind and name. It is the personification of that spirit of lies and deception which has been so long in the world, and which, as we have seen, has fresh and various manifestation in the last times. These two, Antichrist and the false prophet, the impersonation of hostility and the impersonation of deceit, are in closest alliance. It is Pilate, as representing the haughty and godless impersonation of world-power, and Herod, as representing perverted theocracy, re-appearing in immensely increased proportions, and under other and yet more sinister names. Notice that the false prophet performs his pretended miracles "in the sight," "in the presence" of the beast. Whatever form falseness, in either organization or in doctrine, may take, it is in the interest of the world-long antichristian war upon the kingdom of God. By the "miracles," or "signs" (σημεῖα), are meant the pretended miracles, the legends, the sophistries—all that paraphernalia of deception in which Satanic art and perverted human craft, working together, might seem to have exhausted the whole armory of lies.—**With which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast.** A most significant clause. Only those who have the mark of the beast can be deceived by such "lying wonders," or such sophistries as those which the false prophet practices. "The wise shall understand." Those "led captive by the devil" are "willingly" so. Every kind of depraved tendency, and every form of pre-disposition on the side of error and sin is, so far, "the mark of the beast," because it is, so far, a sign that we belong—not to God—but to the enemy of God.—**And them that worshipped his image.** The image of the beast is that usurped power which he exercises in the interest of this war upon the people and Kingdom of God. The second beast, we are told (ch. 13:14), compelled them that dwell on the earth to "make an image to the beast." In ancient times the image, or statue, of the Roman Emperor was made an object of worship. In numerous cases Christians suffered death because of their refusal to join in this degrading idolatry. Papal absolutism was the image or reproduction of imperial absolutism. Kindred in nature is that dominance over the faith of mankind which every manner of false teaching claims. When it cannot oppress in ordinary forms of persecution, it over-awes by other means; and by sneers, and derision, and mockery, seeks to intimidate when it cannot convince. It is all "the image of the beast"; and they who yield, whether to the tyranny of popes, or to infidel reviling, bow down to "the image of the

21 And the remnant [a] were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: [b] and all the fowls [c] were filled with their flesh.

21 fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, *even the sword* which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

a ver. 15....b ver. 17 : 18....c ch. 17 : 16.

beast." It is such as these that the false prophet deceives.—**These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.** "*The lake of fire that burneth*" is a more exact representation of the Greek. This, of course, is imagery, and denotes utter and complete annihilation. Fire itself consumes; the element of brimstone adds intensity to the flame, and makes it utterly destructive. The force of the representation is, that the beast and the false prophet now come to a complete and utter perdition. [Is this certain? *i. e.*, if we understand "complete perdition" to be annihilation. If, in the imagery of the vision, "the beast" and "the false prophet" are living, and extremely sinful beings, it is surely possible that "the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone," is conceived of as a source of suffering rather than of annihilation (compare Luke 16 : 23, 24, 28, and the exposition of Rev. 20 : 10, 14, 15). To say that the beast and the false prophet are not really single persons, is of course, no objection to this view. In the *symbolism* they are living beings, personal and sinful, and must be conceived of as such when cast into the lake of fire, which is itself a part of the symbolism.—A. H.]

21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls [*birds*] **were filled with their flesh.** "The remnant" means the followers of the beast and the false prophet—those who fought upon their side. What was announced by the angel in his summons to all birds of prey now comes to pass. The result of the struggle is utter destruction for those who fought against the rider upon the white horse. This victory is complete; the field is swept clear of enemies; not one is left to continue the fearful strife. Under imagery so intense and tremendous, is represented to us the final triumph of that gospel of Jesus Christ, whose beginnings were so glorious, whose ordeal was so severe, whose vicissitudes have been so great, often so apparently threatening; but whose issue is the salvation of all the "called and chosen and faithful," the discomfiture of beast and false prophet alike, and the hopeless ruin of all who have been with them in their war against God's Kingdom and God's truth.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

The bearing of what appears in this chapter upon questions that will arise in the study of the next, ought to be especially noted. The chapter, in every part of it, presents to view a *consummation*—a consummation variously indicated, and in which various parts of the divine plan are seen in triumphant execution. One of these is revealed to us in the theme of the heavenly song with which the chapter opens. In chapters seventeen and eighteen, mystical Babylon, the Rome of the Papacy—that great apostasy whose career has filled so large a part of the whole period of the Christian Dispensation, and through which such dishonor and damage have been wrought—this mystical Babylon, whether in its symbol of the harlot sorceress or that of the powerful and rich, the corrupt and corrupting city, is discovered to us, alike in its power and its decline, its prosperity and its final overthrow. The doom of Babylon, then, at the opening of the nineteenth chapter, becomes the theme of heavenly song, in which all God's "servants" in earth and heaven join. Herein is one part of the consummation. This "mystery of God" is herein completely "finished." His design in permitting the rise and reign of such an evil power is fully accomplished, and now, "at the blast of the breath of his nostrils," what seemed so mighty and so enduring, vanishes "as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor."

And now appears another consummation. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." In other words, the ends of the Dispensation, in preparing for the church, as including the Lord's redeemed people of all ages, a glorious and happy era, have now been accomplished. To this Bride of the Lamb "it is given that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure," which is the "righteousness of the saints." Not that the Kingdom of God has passed its earthly period, or the redeemed all

been gathered home in final holiness and happiness—for there are yet to be the thousand years of the millennium—and after that another, and a final great struggle and victory. But in the destruction of the corrupting harlot, one source of damage to the Christianity of the world is taken finally away. In the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet, others are soon to be removed. Accompanying these deliverances, we may suppose that there shall be peculiar gifts of grace and spiritual power sent from above; the negative aspects of the new era being accompanied by conspicuous positive features, and the Christian world becoming at last what the gospel ideal has all along required. The redeemed on earth and the redeemed in heaven are more truly "one family"; the church above and the church below become in a pre-eminent sense "one church of the Living God." It is the era of consummation in grace and redemption. During long ages of betrothal the Lamb had waited for his Bride. She "hath" now "made herself ready"; and "blessed," indeed, "are they who are called to the marriage-supper."

Simultaneously with all this occurs the overthrow and final destruction of the beast and the false prophet. We understand by the symbol of the white horse and his rider, with the glorious retinue accompanying, exactly this of which we have just been speaking, only seen now under a new aspect. The symbol of the bride and the marriage-supper presents to view the Lamb's redeeming work in its happy and glorious consummation. The symbol of the horse and his crowned rider presents to view the same exalted being riding forth to take possession of the world itself, which he has also redeemed. The names he bears declare alike who he is and why he comes. He is Faithful and True —the trust, and hope, and joy of his people in all ages. He is the Word, the God manifest. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now, in these last days, the Word of God, in himself a consummation of gospel promise and provision, comes forth upon the scene with attendant efficacies of divine power which carry all before them. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. This world, so long the scene of usurped dominion, belongs to him. He comes now again to his own, and his own will now receive him. The beast and the false prophet are consumed with the breath of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. A triumphant gospel, made mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, gains final and consummating victories so absolutely complete, that no form of symbolical representation can adequately depict them save that of a field of battle piled with slaughtered foes, kings and their armies, the chief captains and the hosts they led all dead on the field, while the instigators of the rebellion thus finally crushed, beast and false prophet, are led captive in chains, and as their final doom cast into the burning lake.

This is, therefore, the consummation. It is the climax of the present Dispensation; it is the gospel in its final triumph. The millennium is prepared. The opening of the next chapter shows us Satan himself chained and shut up in a sealed prison. Nothing is then left to hurt or destroy, in all God's holy mountain. The wolf henceforth shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. For he has come who with righteousness shall judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. Righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins—the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

It will be seen that we understand this coming of the Lord, foreshadowed in the rider on the white horse, as a *spiritual* coming. The consistency of the symbolism requires that we shall interpret what is seen in this part of the vision in harmony with that other appearance at the opening of the first seal, under which was presented to view a triumphing gospel in its first era. That was the truth winning victories; this is the truth, symbolically impersonated in him who is himself the Truth, winning a more resplendent and a final victory. We believe it to be in the purpose of God that this honor shall be given to his revealed word, and to the institutions and forces of Christianity; that by these the ultimate achievement shall be gained. After ages of reproach and of hard struggle against every manner of opposing

CHAPTER XX.

AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, [a] having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

1 AND I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain [1] in

[a] ch. 1: 18; 9: 1.—[1] Gr. upon.

force, we believe it to be in his purpose to justify that courageous utterance of the great apostle, which has been since on the lips of so many: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation." To us it would seem almost like a confession of defeat, if those methods of divine grace in operation so long were suddenly to be displaced, and a new dispensation, under other auspices, take possession of the field. The millennium, in our view, will be brought on by the same means as have been employed in all ages of the gospel history, so that the truth and its instrumentalities—truth as it is in Jesus, and the church bought with his blood—may stand forever vindicated.

How much of detailed event may be regarded as implied in the general picture given us in this chapter, it is impossible to say. It is the opinion of Elliott, and others seem to share his view, that the occurrence of the Hebrew word, "Alleluia," in the song of praise at the opening of the chapter, hints at that important event, the conversion of the Jews. His words are: "I infer that the Jews will probably just at, or after this catastrophe [the fall of Babylon], be converted (conjunctively with a vast number of Gentiles), the completed outpouring of the seven vials having marked the time for it; and join, and indeed take the lead in, the earthly church's song of praise on the occasion: the language used to designate this song in the Apocalyptic prefigurations, being now for the first time *Hebrew, Hallelujah;* a circumstance very remarkable, and noted by many previous commentators as having the meaning I suggest—not to add that its probability is enhanced, as I think, by the fact that the Jews themselves, at least, some of the most learned of their Rabbis, have supposed that the restoration of their people is to follow on the fall of Rome." He notes, as agreeing with him in this view, Brightman, Vitringa, Daubuz, and others. Perhaps the suggestion should not be hastily dismissed, The remarkable preservation of the Jewish nationality, in spite of the wide and prolonged dispersion, seems to point toward some as yet unfulfilled purpose in the original calling of that people. The ancient prophecies, so long interpreted as promising a restoration of the Jews to their own land, and their re-establishment as a nation, would seem to imply, at least, that as a people, they are one day to "return and come" to the *spiritual* "Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads"; while Paul's words, in Rom. 11: 15–21, appear to teach that there is to come a "receiving" of these once so "cast away," which is to be not only to them, but to the Gentile world as well, as "life from the dead." Our own belief is that in the consummation of which we have spoken, the Jews, as converted, and so "graffed in," are to share, and in a way to signalize in some remarkable manner, divine purposes of grace toward that people and toward the world.

Other thoughts, suggested in a general way by the chapter we have studied, may present themselves more appropriately in the consideration of that which now follows, and whose connection with this one should be particularly remarked.

MILLENNIUM AND FINAL JUDGMENT.

1-3. THE BINDING OF THE DRAGON.

1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit [*of the abyss*] **and a great chain in his hand.** "*Coming down out of heaven*"; the angel is again seen in the act of descending. The chain is "upon" his hand, "as a chain naturally would be," says Alford. Many commentators — Hengstenberg among the moderns—think that the angel is Christ. There is no good reason for this, or for viewing the angelic appearance in this case otherwise than in former passages. By the "abyss" in many places in this book (as in 9: 1; 11: 7; 17: 8), the abode of Satan and all evil spirits is meant. The mention of their abode *as a place*, ought, probably, to be regarded as belonging to the symbolism of the book, and must not be treated in a way too realistic.

2 And he laid hold on [a]the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and [b]set a seal upon him, [c]that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

2 his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound
3 him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut *it*, and sealed *it* over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

[a] ch. 12:9. See 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6....[b] Dan. 6:17....[c] ch. 16:14, 16; ver. 8.

So, likewise, with the chain on the hand of the angel, and, indeed, the scenery and action of the whole vision.

2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan. We readily recall the previous mention of the dragon, in chapter twelve. In ver. 9 of that chapter he is identified in exactly the same terms as here—"that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan," with the added words, "which deceiveth the whole world." It is there told how he was "cast out into the earth, and his angels with him." We have since been told much of his ravage as the instigator of all the worst things done on the earth, especially by his own instruments, the beast and the false prophet. He is the Devil—"the false accuser," "the slanderer," and Satan, "the adversary,' "the enemy." His dragon form well befits his nature.—**And bound him a thousand years.** Treating this language as symbolical—as we ought to do—we understand by it an effectual restraint applied to that evil of the world, Satanic in origin, through which such fearful ravage has been wrought. Some part of this merciful interposition is described for us in the previous chapter. The beast and the false prophet, Antichrist in the various forms of his operation, have been overthrown and destroyed. And now a like fate awaits him whose instruments these were, and who gave to them "his power, his seat, and his great authority." For the present, he is simply chained and imprisoned. There is to be for him one more opportunity of mischief, as is intimated below. Then will come, for him also, a final overthrow. Whether the thousand years should be understood as indicating an exact period of that length, is doubtful. It has usually been so understood; the tendency of opinion among commentators, at present, is to view it as denoting in general a long extended period, with fixed and definite bounds, and within which certain great designs of God shall be brought to a full consummation. If any prefer to regard it as an exact thousand years, and so to apply to it in a strict sense the word "millennium," we can see no serious objection to the view.

3. And cast him into the bottomless pit [*the abyss*], **and shut him up and set a seal upon him** [*shut it and sealed it over him*]. We must treat this as imagery, consistently with the almost universal law of interpretation for this book. The imagery however is intense and vividly suggestive. That interposition of divine power which now puts the evil of the world under rigorous restraint, is mighty and effective. Antichristian systems, not only, are brought to nought, but the myriad forms of temptation and instigation in which men have been assailed are made to cease, while, in a like proportion, the good, the true, and the beneficent have scope and power. While there is no reason to think that exactly what the vision sets forth will literally occur, there can be no doubt that the author of evil, and all the agencies and methods through which for thousands of years he has wrought such infinite mischief, will be as effectually put down and held in check as if the binding, the imprisoning, and the sealing were to occur precisely as they appear in the vision.—**That he should deceive the nations no more.** In ch. 12:9, it is said of him that he "deceiveth the whole world." The omnipresent activity of Satan and his instruments, so far as this world is concerned, is here distinctly indicated. What a change it must be when this ceases, and Satanic agency becomes among men a thing unknown!—**Till the thousand years should be fulfilled** [*should be finished*]: **and after that he must be loosed for a little season.** As intimated above, the dragon does not at once meet the fate of the beast and the false prophet. This which comes before us in the present chapter is not a *final* finishing of "the mystery of God"; at least until we come to the closing verses of it. The millennium is not the absolute com-

4 And I saw [a] thrones, and they sat upon them, and [b] judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* [c] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and [d] which had not worshipped the beast, [e] neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and [f] reigned with Christ a thousand years.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ

[a] Dan. 7:9, 22, 27; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30....[b] 1 Cor. 6:2, 3....[c] ch. 6:9....[d] ch. 13:12....[e] ch. 13:15, 16....[f] Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; ch. 5:10.

pletion of God's designs as regards the world and men. It is an era in the history and progress of his kingdom, but there is to be a history beyond it. In it we see those ministries of redemption which, during centuries and under conditions so adverse in many ways, had seemed to operate under such disadvantage and with comparatively limited result—in the millennium we perceive these in operation with the power and effect properly belonging to them, and with those hindrances against which they had contended so long taken out of the way. But there will be one more uprising of evil before the final end comes—Satan is once more to be "loosed." Yet only "for a little season"—"a little time," as the revision more exactly expresses it.

4. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN. **And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.** What follows, now, is a natural sequence of the binding of Satan. With the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet removed from the scene, a great change comes to the earth and to men. As one element of this change—its chief element—the kingdom of God is manifested in peculiar power. At the opening of that other great era which ushered in the Dispensation—now, in one phase of it, closed—it was said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' There were those then living who, as our Lord declared they would, saw that kingdom come with power—in the resurrection and ascension of the Christ, and in the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit. The millennial era is signalized in a like way. "I saw thrones," John says, in declaring to us the vision in which the opening glories of this great epoch were made to appear. These "thrones" symbolized the manifestation of the kingdom in new power and splendor. The words "and they sat upon them," simply say, in the peculiar style of this book, that these thrones were occupied. The "they" is indefinite, and having no antecedent, cannot be understood as indicating who these enthroned ones were. The expression appears to be used merely to say to us that the thrones were not empty. —**And judgment was given unto them.** To the occupants of the thrones. Not final "judgment," surely; this is reserved for the occupant of another throne, "the great white throne," described in the end of the chapter. Some assistance, at this point, may be gained from a parallel passage in Daniel (ch. 7:21, 22). "I beheld, and the same horn"—the little horn described in the previous verse—"made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The sinister power here described—"the little horn"—we have seen much of, under the symbol of the beast, in previous chapters of our book. By the coming of "the Ancient of Days," we understand those signal interpositions of divine power and supremacy through which all the great forces of opposition have been, at the point in Apocalyptic disclosure now reached, so effectually cast down. In the vision of our present chapter, the time has come when "the saints possess the kingdom," and "judgment is given unto them." All that is imported in the word "judgment," as used in Daniel and also here, it may be impossible to ascertain. The reference is, no doubt, to conditions of the millennial life, most of which are quite beyond our power of foresight or anticipation. Lange says: "The entire æon"—the millennial age—"is to be conceived of as an æon of separations and eliminations in an ethical and cosmical sense—separations and eliminations such as are necessary to make manifest and to complete the ideal regulations of life. . . . . The reference can only be to a critical government and management, preparatory to the final consummation." It is doubtful if the meaning can be anything positively, least of all, form-

ally judicial. It is, as we conceive it, more like the judgments mentioned by our Lord, in different places in the fifth of John. The "Father," he says, in ver. 22 of that chapter, has "committed all judgment unto the Son"; in ver. 27, "has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man"; and in ver. 30, he says, "As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "Under the economy of grace," says Dr. John Brown, commenting on the passage, "the whole administration of the divine moral government is put into the hands of the incarnate Son—the glorified God-man, Christ Jesus. . . The Father administers government, under the new economy, not directly, but by the Son. Everything connected with the government of the church and of the world, inclusive of the final distribution of rewards and punishments, has been entrusted to him." Dr. Brown regards the word "judge" in this passage quoted from the Gospel, as "equivalent to 'govern—to rule.'" Until the time of the millennium, the judgment which our Lord exercises is a *moral* judgment; his own character, his teachings, the institutions of Christianity, his *religion*, in short, judges the world; arraigns it, convicts it of the wrong that is in it; condemns it. We must suppose that in the millennium this becomes even more conspicuously true, and that in it, then as now, his elect people will share. Even now, they judge and condemn the world in proportion as they have Christ's truth, and in their example copy Christ's life. When the consummation comes, and the gospel reign is fully established, this judgment will be even more expressed, decided, and conclusive. The millennium itself will judge all the former ages; and they who have part therein will, in all that belongs to them as the Lord's redeemed people, pass judgment upon that old, sinful, unhappy world, in which, during so many centuries, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet contended with the rightful Sovereign for supremacy.—**And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands** [*and upon their hands*]. These words refer us, clearly, to what has gone before in descriptions of the ordeals endured by the Lord's faithful ones during many ages, and their fidelity under them. Literally, "them that had been beheaded (πεπελεκισμένων)," would read "them that had been smitten (or slain) with the axe." In a former allusion to these martyrs (ch. 6:9), a different word is used—(ἐσφαγμένων)—meaning literally, "slain by cutting the throat." The two descriptions of the manner of death are substantially identical. The allusion is, in the two places, quite clearly, to the same class—those who suffered a violent death "for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God." The rendering of what follows in the revision makes the meaning much more clear than that of the old version. The form of the latter might indicate that this following clause should be treated as appositional with that which precedes, and be regarded as describing the same class of martyred saints. A different sense is afforded by the translation—doubtless a correct one—"*and such as* (οἵτινες)." The words show that besides those who had suffered martyrdom, *all* those were seen who had not worshiped the beast, nor worn his mark, nor bowed down to his image—that is to say, all the faithful of former ages. John sees "*the souls*" of these. It is not as in ver 12 of this chapter, where he says, "I saw *the dead*, the small and the great, standing before the throne."—**And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** The word here translated "lived," (ἔζησαν), does not mean "lived again," (ἀνέζησαν). There is no mention of a resurrection in this fourth verse. These now described we understand to be those mentioned in the beginning of the verse: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." The occupants of the thrones are Christ and his redeemed people. In other words, in the millennial age, the kingdom of God has achieved such consummation of all its great designs that the positions of absolute supremacy in the world, the reigning influences, government, administration, all the forces that control individual, social, and political life, are so in the hands of Christ as King, and of his people as "with him," that they may truly be said to "reign." It is a condition, the exact contrast of that which now

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

5 a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This

appears, where every step of progress in Christ's kingdom is contested, and the seats of power are so often filled by his enemies. In the millennium this shall no longer be. The earth "filled with the knowledge of God," the forces of evil either annihilated or chained, truth triumphant, and righteousness and peace prevailing, the gospel ideal will be seen, no longer as a hope, but as a reality.

5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. "But" should be omitted, as in the revision. "*Should be finished*" is better than "were finished." The words in the Greek here translated "lived not again," mean simply "lived not," and the revision, as will be seen, so translates. There is no word in the Greek for "again." Whether the language used shall be taken as *equivalent* to "lived not again until," etc., and so as implying actual bodily resurrection, is not entirely clear. If the passage in John 5: 25, 28, 29, be taken as in some sense the basis of this, the resurrection, here mentioned, must be bodily and literal, since in that former passage the antithesis is, first a spiritual life from the dead, and second, a coming to life of "all that are in their graves." If, besides, the words "the rest of the dead lived not until," etc., be understood of a literal resurrection, they must be anticipative of what appears in the closing verses of this chapter. The whole representation, then, as regards the first and the second resurrection, will stand thus: That period of gospel *consummation* which we understand to be meant in what is termed "the millennium," is brought on by an overwhelming and triumphant manifestation of divine power in connection with evangelical agency and effort; this being indicated, at the close of the nineteenth chapter, by the victories of the crowned rider upon the white horse, with the armies of heaven following him. The effect is to not only greatly multiply throughout the world the number of believers so as to place them in the immense majority, but to so elevate the tone of Christian living, so infuse it with "the power" of the Lord's own "resurrection," as that they may be said, in a supreme sense, to *live;* while Christianity itself will have gained such supremacy, as that its forces will be "reigning" forces. In this new age of the church, too, the spirit of primitive Christianity will be in such measure revived and restored, as that it shall be as if those ancient confessors had returned to the earth. This is the spiritual resurrection, corresponding Apocalyptically to that mentioned in John 5: 25; but this as seen in the realization of its highest earthly ideal. Resurrection in the other, more literal, sense, however, does not take place "till the thousand years are finished." [The General Editor is glad to find himself at this point in substantial accord with Dr. Smith; his own view of this difficult passage may be stated briefly as follows: (1) That the faithful dead (prominence being given to the martyrs) are represented as having lived and reigned with Christ during this period, because the living servants of Christ were like those faithful martyrs, possessing their spirit of fidelity to the Lord, and remind every observer of them. The church of that period will be a martyr church in its fidelity to the Lord. (2) That "the rest of the dead," *i. e.*, the violent, persecuting foes of Christ and his people, are represented as not having lived *until* (ἄχρι) the thousand years were accomplished, because during this blessed period there will be no reappearance of bitter and prevailing enemies to Christ. It will be *as if* evil men, with all their terrible forces, were in their graves, and had no representatives among the living; or, if any, but few and weak representatives, unable to make head against the victorious and controlling children of God. (3) That the living of the martyred dead in the lives of the faithful servants of Christ, is called, in the symbolism of this passage, "the first resurrection," while the living of "the rest of the dead," in the violently wicked, after the thousand years are finished, is called by implication the second resurrection. For when it is said that "the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished," it is surely implied that they were to live again. And this renewed life is described in ver. 7-9. Both resurrections are therefore included in the symbolism of the pas-

6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such [a]the second death hath no power, but they shall be [b]priests of God and of Christ, [c]and shall reign with him a thousand years.

6 is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no [1]power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him [2]a thousand years.

a ch. 2: 11; 21: 8....*b* Isa. 61: 6; 1 Pet. 2: 9; ch. 1: 6; 5: 10....*c* ver. 4.——1 Or, *authority*....2 Some ancient authorities read, *the*.

sage.—A. H.]—**This is the first resurrection.** "This" which is described in ver. 4, not the living again of "the rest of the dead."

6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. Words of benediction, implying the fullness and the endlessness of blessing ensured to the Lord's redeemed ones. The admonitory implication in the last part of the verse should be noted. Over those who have part in the first resurrection the second death hath no power, *authority*—(ἐξουσίαν)—it cannot claim them nor reach them. Over those who have *not* such part in the first resurrection the second death *hath* power, as is set forth in such awful imagery in the closing verses of this chapter.

EXCURSUS E.—I. THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

Two main topics are brought to view in that portion of our chapter thus far studied—the First Resurrection and the Millennium. In offering some further thoughts upon these, we must note a few points, as preliminary, which may be accepted as guiding ones. (1) First of all is the close connection between this chapter and that which precedes. This twentieth chapter is sometimes dealt with as if it stood wholly by itself; or, at all events, as if the succession of visions were here broken, while we go back to "the beginning of the gospel." So it is when, as is done by some writers (for example, in the *Speaker's Commentary*), the binding of the dragon is understood as the effect upon Satan's kingdom wrought by the personal coming, and ministry, and above all the death, of our Lord—as when he himself said, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven"—or by others as the final overthrow of Paganism. The nineteenth and twentieth chapters, it should seem, ought not to be thus separated. The latter comes, in the succession of the visions, in immediate connection with the former. This is made the more apparent as we consider (2) how, in the natural order of events, the binding of the dragon follows the destruction of the beast and the false prophet. To place the binding of Satan at the opening of the Christian Dispensation, is to disregard the fact that we see him active and powerful upon the Apocalyptic scene during the whole Christian period, and the instigator of every form of organized wickedness. It is from the pursuit of the dragon that the woman flees into the wilderness; it is the dragon that "gives power unto the beast"; it is the dragon that makes war upon "the remnant" who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." There is a Satanic presence and activity, either express or implied, in all this long war upon the kingdom and people of God. The beast and the false prophet are simply his instruments. He, himself, back of all, is the recognized source of all the evil that is done by them. Now that *they* have perished, his own doom naturally follows. It is a sequence which might almost have been anticipated. (3) Care must be exercised not to break in too abruptly, in our interpretation, upon the pervading symbolism of the book. This seems to be the fault of that extreme Chiliasm which takes as literal so much of the millennial imagery. Throughout most of the book, thus far, we have been dealing with symbols. From the point where the Apocalypse properly begins—the opening of the fourth chapter—our work has been to find under imagery the meaning of the Spirit in a succession of amazing visions. We must not, here, break in abruptly upon this method of interpretation, and begin now to take what is pictorial and figurative as if it were literal and realistic. (4) It is very important that we do not *read into* the passage meanings suggested by general theories as to the time of the Lord's second advent, or the nature in detail of the millennium. What the passage actually contains, in plain language or in fair implication, is what we should find in it—that, and no more.

We will now notice, briefly, two theories

of interpretation for the words in our passage, as seen in their connection, "This is the first resurrection." One is that which views this resurrection as a literal one, including either all who until the millennium have died in the Lord, or else those only who have been conspicuous for their fidelity under trial in all centuries of the long period of ordeal. Alford treats this "first resurrection" as thus literal. His words are: "If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain souls lived (ψυχαὶ ἔζησαν), at the first, and the rest of the dead lived (νεκροὶ ἔζησαν) only at the end of a specified period after the first—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave—then there is an end to significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything." Upon this we remark (1) that it is at least an over-statement of the case, as it stands. A transition from the figurative to the literal, exactly of that kind which Alford pronounces so utterly inadmissible, does certainly occur at that place in the fifth of John, of which we have already taken some notice. The transition in that place is evident, from that spiritual life from the dead which is the effect of regeneration to the final rising and coming forth of "all that are in their graves." A conjunction thus of the figurative with the literal in the same association of thought which is possible there without a "wiping out of Scripture as a definite testimony to anything," is surely quite as possible here. (2) In the next place, it is right to frankly admit the force of the antithesis implied in the words, "the rest of the dead," in ver. 5. The interpretation which Alford supposes to be thus made imperative might be admitted without carrying with it any part of Alford's related views as to the pre-millennial date of our Lord's Second Advent. The living and reigning with Christ predicated of those who "have part in the first resurrection" does not necessarily imply a personal presence of the Lord. Such a thing, too, is no doubt conceivable as a resurrection of the righteous dead, and their presence on the earth during the millennial period, along with those who live the ordinary earthly life. Questions arise in that connection, however, which are hard to dispose of. Under what conditions will this association of the risen saints with the already living ones be maintained? How will it be with those who at the opening of the millennium are thus living on the earth—will they be subject to death? If so, will they at once be raised again? Will they pass from mortality to immortality without tasting of death? How, also, will those words of Paul in 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17, which tell how the Lord shall descend, the dead in Christ rise first, and *we which are alive and remain be caught up to meet the Lord in the air*, be made to comport with an exegesis of our present passage which seems to leave no room for attending incidents such as Paul describes? It is by no means claimed that the view of this difficult section of our chapter which we have ventured to suggest, is itself without serious difficulty. Yet where each one of the various interpretations offered is open to objection at some point, the student of this passage may be willing to consider, in connection with others, that which makes the first and second resurrections here analogous, in a general way at least, to the spiritual and literal resurrections placed in such relations with each other by our Lord in the fifth of John.

The other theory of interpretation for our passage which we proposed to notice, is that of Whitby. We take so much of this, given in his own words, as concerns the present point: "I believe," he says, "that after the fall of Antichrist there shall be such a glorious state of the church, by the conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, as shall be to it *life from the dead;* that it shall then flourish in peace and plenty, in righteousness and holiness, and in a pious offspring; that then shall begin a glorious and undisturbed reign of Christ over both Jew and Gentile, to continue a thousand years, during Satan's binding; and that, as John the Baptist was Elias because he came *in the spirit and power of Elias*, so shall this be *the church of the martyrs*, and of those who had not received *the mark of the beast*, because of their entire freedom from all doctrines and practices of the antichristian church, and because the purity of the times of the primitive martyrs shall return."

Perhaps the view we have suggested will not be thought to differ very widely from this. We should say that the passage in the fifth

of John being in some sense the basis of what we have in our present chapter, the idea, virtually the same in both places, is here conceived Apocalyptically, and expressed in Apocalyptic language and imagery; besides being applied under those circumstances of extraordinary spiritual manifestation which usher in the millennial age.

II. THE MILLENNIUM.

Of our view as to the nature of the millennium, we have already given some intimations. The millennium we look upon as *the era, or period of consummation.* The opening period of Christianity was one of singular triumph and progress; symbolized in our book in the opening of the first seal. The next was a period of ordeal, symbolized, as to its beginning, by the red horse and his rider, of the latter of whom it is said that "it was given him to take peace from the earth"; and as to the various characterizing features of it in what appeared at the opening of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth seals. This same period is again exhibited in vision under the first six trumpets. Following the period of ordeal comes that of *development.* It is a period symbolized in its main feature by the "little book" and the angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to proclaim to the whole world. There were to be, even in this period, divine visitations, revolutions, commotions, yet not as in the period of ordeal, while its main characteristic should be the proclamation of the divine message to men, in the simplicity of its original form, as gospel, and as "prophecy" in announcements of the swiftly coming consummation. During this period, the preaching of the word is the power by which it pleases God to work out his purposes; his providences so accompanying and sustaining this, as that the cause of truth in all great national and social changes, all intellectual progress and achievement, invention, discovery, the founding of new nationalities, and the revolutionizing of old ones—all shall turn out "for the furtherance of the gospel." The period comes to a close in the complete and final overthrow of Antichrist. And now comes that of the *consummation.* Two things especially characterize this—the binding of the dragon, and the "thrones" filled by the Great King and his assessors, the saints of all ages. The former means such a restraint and coercion applied to evil in all its forms as that it shall no longer be the mighty power it has been. We have no doubt that the personal Satan is put under the kind of restraint represented in the symbolism of ver. 1–3. What is especially to be noted, however, is the effect of this in making the dominion of the earth and the world pass away from him to other and worthier hands. That supremacy and dominion which ancient prophecies foreshadowed, and toward which, through ordeal and the various stages of long development, with the vicissitudes characterizing it, the course of events in Christian history has steadily moved —this "kingdom" becomes now a glorious actuality, and it is no longer the evil, but the good, that prevails.

It would seem as if the Lord's people ought to *expect* that the consummation, the millennium, will come in this way. After centuries of such history as the history of Christianity has been up to this hour, and is likely to continue for some time longer, it would seem as if there would surely come *vindication* for that which so long had suffered reproach. The great apostle was not "ashamed" to be a preacher of this gospel, knowing that, whatever a deriding world may say of it, it is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." So have felt thousands and thousands of faithful men in their ministry of the same truth. Will there not come, one day, an overwhelming vindication of this confidence? Will not the gospel be one day *proved* to be "the power of God and the wisdom of God"? Everywhere in the Bible, from the point where it is promised that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, all the types, all the prophecies, every divine institution, the very name—"Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of heaven"—given to this great spiritual force against which so many formidable forces stand in fierce array during so many ages—all this looks forward, constantly, in either express or implied forms of predictive foreshadowing, to a time to come, when this very same power, as we now see it, and in its present methods of operation, shall completely triumph.

It seems a fault of that theory of the millennium which views it as a *personal* reign of Christ on the earth, that it seems to describe a new dispensation, rather than the con-

summation and triumph of the present one. Especially is this the case, when it is asserted, as a necessary part of this theory, that the last ages of the present Dispensation are to be peculiarly gloomy ones—Antichrist and all powers of evil triumphing, and the world almost wholly surrendered to the devil and his angels. Does not that seem like a failure of Christianity, so far as this world is concerned, in its whole system of instituted agencies, and as if only in a new Dispensation, with a new and different array of spiritual forces, the designs of this present one could after all be accomplished? Is it not more as we should expect from all we know of God's customary procedure, from the language of type, and prophecy, and psalm, and from the very fact that "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," is "*a kingdom*," not a mere system of human instrumentalities, destined to be worsted at last in their final struggle with the evil of the world—is it not what we ought to look for, that the millennium shall come as the victorious consummation of Christian progress and triumph—the Kingdom of God with all its aims achieved, and with not one word of promise or prophecy unfulfilled?

If this view be accepted, *the nature* of the millennium is more easy of anticipation. It is what the people of God wish to see, fully become a fact. Said Jesus, of the prophets and holy men: "Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not," (Matt. 13:17). Will not that same thing be said in the millennium, and in a like sense? What the people of God *now* "desire to see," is the gospel universally prevailing, and universally victorious. What that would be, we can in a measure understand. What the world would be, with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet cast out of it; what it would be with Christianity everywhere prevailing and everywhere the reigning force, we can in some degree anticipate. What a vast array of crimes and miseries would go out of the world along with those evil forces, whose symbols we have just made use of once again! The tempting devil, the oppressing, corrupting, tyrannous world-force—the wild beast of our prophecy; the lying and deluding false prophet, the second wild beast, with all the power of the beast before him—or which preceded him in appearance on the Apocalyptic scene—with additions of power to do mischief peculiarly his own—these banished from the world, and what a revolution would not that itself be! The world thus becomes the undisputed theatre for the promotion and achievement of the great design of Christianity. Its truth gains ready access and prevails. Its motives and aims no longer traduced, no longer resisted, enter into and sway the very life of the world. The family, society, the nation, the world-wide community of nations, are transformed by the very indwelling of that Spirit which, amidst so many resisting influences, acts upon them only from without. The industries of life do not cease, neither does the spirit of enterprise subside into sluggishness and inertia; but human exertion, though it may take like directions, is informed with another spirit, and lays what it gains on quite other altars. The fields of slaughter in past ages, so bloom with the harvest of consecrated and successful and happy toil, that scarcely can it be believed what scenes of blood and horror were once enacted there. Great cities become centres of regenerative power; themselves transformed, transforming efficacy goes forth from them, along those same channels of necessary influence which now reek with what is most filthy and most poisonous. Toil sings at its happy daily tasks; worship rejoices in each return of its accustomed hour; human enjoyment is purified by the spirit that controls it; and if there be burdens, they are turned to pleasures by the motive that prompts the bearing of them. In a word, the world and humanity become what they were invited to be during ages of unvalued proffers of the divine gift. It is the marriage supper of the Lamb, and "blessed," indeed, are they who "enter in."

This consummation, as we term it, is to have its own period. Whether this shall be for a literal and actual "thousand years," it may not be necessary for us now to determine. It will, at all events, have its own limits; its own beginning and its own ending. There are those who doubt if the aspect of the world at the present time, warrants the belief that we are approaching a consummation of this nature. It is because they see

7 And when the thousand years are expired, [a] Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
8 And shall go out [b] to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, [c] Gog and Magog, [d] to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.

7 And when the thousand years are finished, Satan
8 shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of

[a] ver. 2....[b] ver. 3, 19....[c] Ezek. 38: 2; 39: 1....[d] ch. 16: 14.

that aspect at only one angle of vision. That there is wickedness abundant in the world to-day, is but too sadly true—opposition to every form of truth and every endeavor to promote righteousness and a true human welfare. Yet the world is not, even in this, what it was. Humanity may *seem* worse than ever, because we know more of it; crime more prevalent, because in every instance it gets dragged into the light; blasphemous error more formidable, because it is allowed to speak all that is in its heart. Christianity may seem less a united force, because it is the spirit of the age to "try all things." The church may seem more worldly, because the time is nearer when all things shall be hers. But, upon the other hand, what a tremendous force is the Christianity of to-day, when all is said! Is it conceivable that this auspicious power, which is so rapidly taking possession of the wide earth, can dwindle into that imbecility which some millennarians appear to predict for it? It has been said that in twenty-five years more, if the present rate of progress continues, India will become as thoroughly Christian as Great Britain is to-day; there will be thirty millions of Christians in China, and Japan will be as fully Christianized as America is now. The old heathen systems, they tell us, are honey-combed, through and through, by Christian influence. It looks as if a day may come soon, when these systems, struck by vigorous blows, will fall in tremendous collapse. Meantime, every "weapon formed against" Christianity, breaks in the hand that holds it. Already, the Lord's "right hand hath gotten him the victory." Surely, not in such a day as this should faith fail, or those theories of the future gain currency which tend to paralyze, rather than to nerve and inspire, the arm of Christian endeavor.

7-10. The Loosing of Satan, and the Final Overthrow.

7. And when the thousand years are expired [*are finished*], **Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.** A change in the phraseology employed, apparently of some significance, should be remarked here. Heretofore we have noticed the constantly occurring "I saw," showing that what then follows is to be treated as *vision*. What is now to be described is announced differently. It has the customary form of prophecy. In ver. 7, 8, the verb is in what is termed "the prophetic future." In ver. 9, 10, the historic form is resumed, a past tense being again employed. The language is still symbolical and figurative, yet the prophet does not seem to be now describing a vision, but foretelling the future in the manner customary in other prophetic books. The "loosing" of Satan figuratively indicates a temporary return of the old times of evil and suffering. How these are brought on, there is nothing in the passage to show, or even suggest. All we can say is that the millennium, glorious and happy as is the period of it, is not the *final* consummation and triumph of the kingdom. The loosing of Satan and the effects that follow, it may be further said, are preliminaries to the general judgment. This great and awful event, it would seem, is to come upon the world at a time when that evil of the world which in it is to suffer a blow so annihilating shall be on exhibition in a climax of iniquity and outrage. It will be according to the usual course of things if "Gog and Magog," wickedness in the form of organized assault, shall be possessed by a fury all the greater because of the long restraint under which they have been held. The brief but vivid description here, and the law of things under such conditions, justify the belief, moreover, that this final outburst of evil will be formidable beyond all previous example. Our Lord himself once said (Luke 18: 8): "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

8. And shall go out [*shall come forth*] **to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog.** The earliest use of the name Magog is at Gen. 10: 2, where he is mentioned as one

of the sons of Japheth. Of Gog we first read in Ezek. 38: 2: "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him." Meshech and Tubal are mentioned along with Magog in Gen. 10: 2. Josephus states that the Scythians were the descendants of Magog, and this, the *Speaker's Commentary* says, "is generally accepted as true." Canon Rawlinson says: "The most striking trace of the former condition of things which remained in the days of Herodotus, was the existence, everywhere in Western Asia, of a large Scythic or Turanian element in the population"; a "condition of things," he adds, "which the recently discovered cuneiform records place altogether beyond a doubt." Further on, after noticing the regions where "these Scythic writings" are found, he remarks: "They can only be accounted for by the supposition that before the great immigration of the Aryan races from the East, Scythic or Tartar tribes occupied the countries seized by them." He speaks of the names Muskai and Tuplai as "constantly associated in the Assyrian inscriptions, just as Meshech and Tubal are in Scripture." These Muschai, or Moschoi, are regarded as those Muscovite ancestors of the modern Russians by whom that great empire was founded and the ancient city of Moscow built. [See Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, Vol. 1, Essay xi]. The Scythians were a peculiarly wild and barbaric people, representative of that rude, ferocious spirit which is so formidable to all civilized nations, and from which the civilization of the ancient world suffered so much. It is agreed among commentators that, although the fact is not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament, there is evidence of a Scythic invasion of Judea, in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and that it is to the dreaded Scythian nations of the north that the latter prophet alludes in the passage of his prophecy above quoted. The striking language used in the chapter (ch. 38) where this prophecy occurs, plainly implies that the devastation wrought in this invasion was a signal one, and left in the minds of those who suffered from it a terrifying sense of the formidableness of this one of their numerous enemies. Some part of what is said, besides, seems to glance forward to what is under view in our present chapter. Concerning "Gog, the land of Magog," the prophet is commissioned to make known this word of the Lord: "It shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face . . . And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God . . . And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people with him, an overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, *fire, and brimstone.*" Whether this intense imagery looks forward to that grand consummating overthrow of the forces of evil which our present passage describes, or not, it seems clear that the passage in Ezekiel is that upon which the symbolism of John in the verses before us is made to rest. As representative of that mighty combination of wickedness and destructiveness to be seen in the last days, he uses these names, Gog and Magog, themselves representative to God's ancient people of that rude ferocity, that brutal destructiveness, which came down upon them with such terror and slaughter in the Scythians of the far, wild north. In the last days, the gathered forces of evil, summoned by Satan to a final war upon the kingdom and people of God, will come from all directions, "the four corners of the earth," and so make assault. In the symbolism of our book, these are as Gog and Magog—names once so terrible in the land of Israel. —**And gather them together to battle.** "*To the war*" (εἰς τὸν πόλεμον), is the correct rendering—a period of struggle, more or less extended.—**The number of whom is as the sand of the sea.** A resisting force may be subdued, and still survive. The predominance of good in the millennium does not make it impossible that evil shall even then remain in the world, though under checks and restraints that so cripple its power as to greatly limit its mischief. It is conceivable, also, that, toward the close of such a period as we suppose the millennium to be, what had been thus put down gradually recovers strength, and in due time becomes formidable again. Such as this is often seen. In fulfillment of divine purpose scope is again allowed to Satanic agencies. With the world as populous as we may well suppose at the close of the millennial age, it is quite con-

9 [a]And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
10 [b]And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, [c]where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and [d]shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

9 the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down[1] out of
10 heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night [2]for ever and ever.

a Isa. 8 : 8; Ezek. 38 : 9, 16....b ver. 8....c ch. 19 : 20....d ch. 14 : 10, 11.—1 Some ancient authorities insert, *from God*....2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

ceivable that in many quarters of it at once this uprising should occur. Wickedness and wicked men once more become bold and defiant. The old war is renewed.

9. And they went up on [*over*] the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. The tense of the verb here used is that which denotes the historical past. In the previous verse, the events indicated are described as future; here they are pictured as if seen by one to whom they were already past. By "the camp of the saints" and "the beloved city" we are to understand the "blessed and holy" people of the millennium, themselves, here presented to us under these figurative phrases. The "city" is not the "New Jerusalem"; that is yet to be revealed, as in the next chapter. The uprising of evil at the end of the millennial age has been spoken of as a "war." Consistently with this, the people of God are represented as if standing on the defensive. They are as if holding a city—a "beloved" one like the Jerusalem of old—with its engirdling "camp." Upon these, in the imagery of the passage, the assaulting forces, numberless, and formidable exceedingly, come; as when in the ancient days, Jerusalem was beleaguered by "armies of the aliens."—**And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.** "From God" should be omitted. The imagery rests upon those incidents in the history of ancient Israel, in which, at a moment of extremity and almost of despair on the part of the Lord's people, divine judgments smote the enemy with annihilating overthrow. We have quoted from Ezekiel a passage in which this was threatened against Gog. In a similar way, the army of Sennacherib was annihilated. Fire from heaven destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; and in a like visitation the divine judgment upon sinners was, in still other instances, executed. (See 2 Kings 1 : 9-14; Num. 16 : 16, 17, 18; Lev. 10 : 1, 2). By judgments as manifestly divine, as awful and as consuming, shall this final uprising of evil be quelled.

10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. "And *they* shall be tormented"; the beast and the false prophet are included. What shall we understand by the "lake of fire and brimstone," as here and elsewhere mentioned? We cannot take the idea in any literal or physical sense, for various reasons: (1) Satan, who is cast into the lake of fire, as a spiritual being cannot be supposed susceptible to effect, "tormenting" or otherwise, from physical causes or agencies. (2) The beast and the false prophet are not even personalities, much less beings subject to any kind of physical effect. The same may be said of "death and hell," mentioned in ver. 14, as "cast into the lake of fire"; (3) the lake of fire belongs, therefore, in general, to the symbolism of the book, and must be treated accordingly; (4) the lake of fire "is the second death" (ch. 20 : 14), and no proper view of the phrase "second death" can represent it as implying physical effects of any kind whatever. Hengstenberg says: "As the fire and brimstone [in the lake of fire] point to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, so it is very natural to suppose that allusion is made to the *Dead Sea* as the image of hell." "The imagery," says Stuart, "is the most terrific which the whole compass of nature can afford—a lake of fire burning with brimstone. The intensity of the flame, the suffocating nature of the fumes, and also the revolting odor which issues from the sulphur, all conspire to render this an image of unparalleled horror." Where the beast and the false prophet, death and hell, are represented as cast into such a lake of fire, the whole is figurative; these impersonalities being treated as personal, and their final destruction repre-

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face [a]the earth and the heaven fled away; [b]and there was found no place for them.
12 And I saw the dead, [c]small and great, stand before God: [d]and the books were opened: and another [e]book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, [f]according to their works.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

[a] 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 11; ch. 21:1....[b] Dan. 2:35....[c] ch. 19:5....[d] Dan. 7:10....[e] Ps. 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; ch. 3:5; 13:8; 21:27....[f] Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; ch. 2:23; 22:12; ver. 13.

sented as if they were capable of suffering like actual beings, and as doomed to such suffering forever. As applied to Satan, the conception relates to an actual being, and is a representation of his final and actual doom; this, however, being presented to us, like so much else in this book, under figurative form. His condition, when at last the deserved doom strikes him, will be that of helpless, hopeless, weltering torment, such as that of one tossed forever on the billows of a lake of fire. It is torment, however, of a nature suited to his own nature, being such as a spirit is capable of suffering. More than this we cannot hope to know upon a subject invested in such awful mystery.

11-15. THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. The fleeing away of the earth and the heaven must not be taken literally. What immediately follows in the connected passage shows this. The actual "earth" must remain, since it is described as giving up its dead, alike its sea and its land. The language is intensely poetical, and wonderfully sublime in its suggestiveness. In the vision, so awful is that divine Presence which appears on the throne, that even inanimate nature cannot bear the sight. It seems as if quailing at that dread Presence; as if fleeing from the glance of that Eye which pierces all veils and fathoms all depths. The whole is intended to make more vivid the tremendous picture, and prepare us for what is to follow. Parallel passages seem to require that we shall know in this Enthroned One, "the Son of man" (as in Matt. 25:31, 32): "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations." It is the culmination of that "judgment" which the Father "hath committed" unto "him; which during long ages had been exercised as a moral administration and rule, and now brings all its aims and measures to a climax, in final, supreme, and irreversible judgment of "the quick and the dead."

12. And I saw the dead, small and great [*the great and the small*], **stand before God.** In the person of him who fills the throne, all the awful glories of the Godhead unite. It is said of even the Word made flesh in his earthly manifestation, that he "was God"; how truly may this be said of him now! What subterfuge will they now find who had refused to see that divinity through the veil of his humiliation? What consternation must fill the hearts of "them also that pierced him"! In this presence and at this tribunal, all earthly distinctions vanish. "The great and the small" are upon one level. All alike must be judged out of the things written in the books.—**And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life.** Of him that overcometh, it is promised that his name shall not be blotted out of the book of life. It is the roll of the redeemed. The names of the Lord's true people are all there.—**And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** How much of this whole description, now, we ought in our interpretation to treat as foreshadowing actual occurrences, is a very difficult question. Two points, at least, may be treated as certain: (1) That in this final judgment there is to be an actual personal coming of the Lord, in the overwhelming glory of a divine manifestation. It is here that, in our own system of interpretation, we find the fulfillment of those predictions, scattered through the New Testament especially, which speak of that second coming. In this connection it is that we trace the realization of what Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians,

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; [a]and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: [b]and they were judged every man according to their works.
14 And [c]death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. [d]This is the second death.

13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man
14 according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second

a ch. 6:8....b ver. 12....c 1 Cor. 15:26, 54, 55....d ver. 6; ch. 21:8.

(1 Thess. 4:13-18), so vividly depicts of the Lord's descent from heaven "with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," the resurrection of the blessed dead and the glorifying "change" of living saints, while all in one beatific company are "caught up to meet the Lord in the air"; thenceforth to be "ever with the Lord." For this coming of the Son of man has two great purposes—to judge the wicked and the lost, and to receive unto himself the people who are his "purchased possession." We may refer also to 1 Cor. 15: 50, *et seq.*, as being to a like effect. (2) In some real and actual sense there is to be a "judgment." The "books" we look upon as belonging to the scenery of the vision. They symbolize that perfect and exact knowledge of each individual character and life upon which the final judgment shall be based. It is as if there were a record, indisputable, exact, confounding to all the condemned, which shall absolutely justify the final sentence, and vindicate forever the unimpeachable rectitude of the divine administration. The book of life symbolizes the fact that of those which had been "given" to him, the Redeemer has "lost none." It is as if a roll had been kept during all the centuries of earth's history, and the name there entered of every one saved by faith, or embraced by the terms of the salvation provided in Christ. No name which a rightly-founded Christian hope had expected to find on that page shall fail to be there found. Under this form of symbol, it is shown us how, in that great day, this is a "hope that maketh not ashamed." Yet within all that is thus to be viewed as symbol is the certain and literal *fact*, that in this way the affairs of the world shall be finally wound up—in an assignment to each human being of that ultimate unchangeable condition, of joy or of woe, which his own life has prepared for him.

13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [*Hades*] **gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** By "Hades" is meant, of course, the world of spirits. "Death" surrenders the body, and "Hades" the spirit. Even "the sea" gives up the dead that were in it. It is now that "the rest of the dead," the dead in the strict and literal sense, "live again." *All* are thus raised, the righteous and the wicked—the former "to life," the latter "to shame and everlasting contempt," (Dan. 12:7). The Scriptures know of no other resurrection of the body but this.

14. And death and hell [*Hades*] **were cast into the lake of fire.** We can only understand by this that there will never again be such a thing in the universe of God as that "death" which was such a dread thing in all human history—such a separation of body and spirit, the one returning to dust, the other a disembodied inhabitant of a world of souls. Events of this nature shall be known no more. They belonged to the history of man on the earth. Now that this history is ended, they also are ended. Death and Hades, as dread powers, are here personified. And this cessation of them is pictured as the destruction of actual beings. [Death, as representative of the dissolution of body and soul, and Hades, as representing the state of the wicked in the unseen world before the last judgment, will be swallowed up forever in the second death, the lake of fire. In the resurrection of the last day, that of the wicked cannot be a resurrection to life, but only to death, in the sense of being finally condemned and of passing into their final state of separation from God.—A. H.]—**This is the second death.** Mention of the "second death" has already been made in ver. 6 of this chapter. Over the "blessed and holy," the regenerated and saved, the second death "hath no power." It is not said to them as to the rest of mankind: "Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We can understand by this only the presentation in figurative form of that final condition which awaits the

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life [a] was cast into the lake of fire.

15 death, *even* the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER XXI.

AND [b] I saw a new heaven and a new earth: [c] for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and

[a] ch. 19: 20....[b] Isa. 65: 17; 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13....[c] ch. 20: 11.

unsaved. For them, and for "the devil and his angels," it is a condition as real as it is dreadful. The impersonalities named, death and hades, the beast and the false prophet, are described as sharing it under a pictorial mode of representation, the meaning of which is that they, in their power to deceive and to destroy, to sadden and to wound, are to be "felt and feared no more."

15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. With these terrible words the record of man's history on earth closes. As these are spoken the curtain descends. When next it rises, we shall see "a new heaven and a new earth."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

The fact should be emphasized that we have now reached not only the end of the Dispensation under which all the great events so far represented on the Apocalyptic scene have transpired, but the end also of the period of human probation. The latter of these indicates the great point of contrast between all that has engaged us heretofore in these studies, and that which is now to follow. The remaining two chapters set forth the *final states*, either of the saved or of the lost. Evidence of this will appear in the course of the following exposition. With the judgment, man's earthly history ends. The "mystery of God" is "finished." Promise, and prophecy, and type, have been all fulfilled; the designs of God in appointing to man such a dwelling-place, and for so long a period, have been all accomplished. What remains of the book is the lifting of a veil beyond which lie the endless spaces of the changeless future.

Upon the final condition of lost men, our book, in this part of it, does not dwell at length. The two closing chapters are almost wholly occupied with pictures of the saved in their happy state. Only an allusion here and there brings to our attention that contrasted picture from which even inspiration seems to turn away, as if it were too sorrowful and terrible for steady contemplation. It is a mystery into which we can have no desire to penetrate. That the justice of the divine administration, that principle of rectitude so essential in a perfect moral sovereignty, will be completely satisfied and vindicated, there can be no doubt. That the doom of the finally lost will be no more severe than those great interests of universal justice demand, we may be sure. All that is doubtful to us, all that is hard to understand, all that appeals to pity or to terror, we leave with that "Judge of all the earth" who will "do right."

The indications are that the overthrow and subjection of evil in the universe is to be complete and final. If we knew all that is to be known of reasons of the divine procedure in permitting a calamity so fearful as the original outbreak of evil—that sin "which brought death into the world and all our woe"—we should most certainly acquiesce in it as infinitely to be approved. All the more are we sure of this as we see that the period during which evil shall have scope and opportunity has its fixed and unalterable limit. The overthrow of evil, however, will not be its annihilation. Its "everlasting punishment," the "smoke" of its "torment ascending forever and ever," necessitate the implication that there will be those who suffer; otherwise the "punishment," the "torment" is a clear impossibility. But the world of doom will forever be a region apart. Never again will evil be suffered to break out of bounds, or Satan allowed to go forth to deceive the nations. Into the City of the Blessed "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." "For the former things are passed away."

ALL THINGS NEW.

1. THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. A crucial question meets us in the opening verse of this chapter. What is to be

understood by the "new heaven and new earth"? A correct exposition of much which follows will depend upon the answer to this question. There are two words in the Greek (νέος and καινός), representative of our English word "new." These two words distinguish shades of meaning which our own language does not express in any such way. It is the second word (καινός), which occurs in this place, and, indeed, throughout the book; as where we read of the "new name" (ch. 2: 17), the "new song" (5: 9; 14: 3), "new Jerusalem," in ver. 2 of this present chapter, and the making all things new," in ver. 5. A further example of New Testament usage, in this regard, is at Matt. 13: 52, where the wise householder is described as bringing out of his treasure "things new and old"; also, at Matt. 27: 60, and John 19: 41, where the tomb in which our Lord was laid is spoken of as "new." The latter word (καινός), is used in all these places, and in others similar. It is the word employed in speaking here of the "new heaven and new earth." Perhaps a passage somewhat more to the present purpose, is that at Luke 22: 20, where our Lord says: "This cup is the new [καινός] testament [*covenant*] in my blood." The distinction in the two Greek words (νέος, καινός), seems to be that, while the former expresses newness of *aspect, appearance*, the latter denotes newness in *kind;* newness in contrast to what is *old;* a sense strongly implied in all the cases noted above. A word is also used by our Lord (Matt. 19: 28), apparently in allusion to the same "new heaven and new earth," mentioned in our passage, a study of which may help us at this point: "Verily, I say unto you, ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is not, we should observe: "ye which have followed me in the regeneration," as is sometimes read; but, "ye which have followed me," shall in the regeneration sit upon thrones, etc. The mention of the Son of man sitting on the throne of his glory, points forward to that "regeneration" of which we are to learn in our present chapter; the making all things new. The word for "regeneration," (παλιγγενεσία), is the same as is used to denote the Christian new birth in Tit. 3: 5, where we read of "the washing of regeneration." The Christian new birth is a new creation only in a figurative sense, implying *transformation*, radical moral change—the human nature, the man, retaining its personal identity unchanged. Our Lord's use of the word in reference to that "new birth" of the physical creation to which we are now directing attention, warrants a view of the new heaven and the new earth somewhat corresponding to that "new man in Christ Jesus," which is the result of spiritual regeneration.—**For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.** We may here refer to the passage in 2 Pet. 3: 7: "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word, have been stored up for fire [or *stored with fire*], being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (*Revised Version*). It does not belong to us, in this place, to discuss at length the words quoted. We may note, however, that they do not necessarily teach that the heaven, or the heavenly bodies, and the earth, are to be absolutely consumed by fire, nor that the words before considered in 20: 14: "Before whose face the earth and the heaven fled away," are to be so understood. Peter does not say, or imply, in the words quoted, that the earth shall be actually burned up. In ver. 10, of the same chapter, the words occur, in our version: "The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." But there is here a disputed reading. The text of Westcott and Hort has, "shall be discovered" (εὑρεθήσεται); although the revision translates "burned up," with the note in the margin. "The most ancient manuscripts read *discovered*." "Shall be found," is proposed as an alternative. *Ellicott's* and the *Speaker's Commentary* suggest that the difficulty found in the obscurity of the passage in this translation, might be relieved by giving it the interrogatorial form: "And shall the earth and the works therein be found?"[1] We need not decide the point here. It will suffice to say that even taking the rendering "burned up," we are not obliged to conclude that the destruction of the earth by fire will be total, or that more is implied than such changes, by means of fire and, perhaps, of other physical agencies, as will adapt it to

[1] Alford thinks that the word (εὑρεθήσεται), *shall be found*, grew out of the word *urentur*, (*shall be burned up*), in the same Latin version.

2 And I John saw [a]the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared [b]as a bride adorned for her husband.

2 the sea is no more. And I saw [1]the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

[a] Isa. 52:1; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14; ch. 3:12; ver. 10....[b] Isa. 54:5; 61:10; 2 Cor. 11:2.—[1] Or, *the holy city Jerusalem coming down new out of heaven.*

the new life that is to be lived upon its surface. There have been already many such changes in the physical history of our globe. There is nothing unlikely, but much in itself probable, in the idea that still another and a yet more signal change awaits it. The earth as it now is, was fitted to be the abode of human beings during the long ages appointed for the working out of God's plan of redemption. When that period ends, it is natural to suppose that a new phase will appear in even the earth's own condition, and that through appropriate transformations it will be itself regenerated, and so made a fitting abode for regenerated man. It would be, besides, quite in the order of customary divine procedure, if all this were to come about, in part at least, in a use of agencies and laws already active. It is often remarked how the elements of fresh physical revolutions are stored beneath the earth's crust, and in its atmosphere, with a possibility of outbreaks such as shall consume what is now seen upon its surface, and possibly change the very "elements" of things in nature. It is more difficult to see in what sense the old "heaven" shall "pass away," and a "new heaven" appear. Perhaps all we need to infer is, that such changes in atmospheric conditions and the relations of other worlds to our own, as are necessarily involved in those transpiring in the earth itself, will occur. We understand, therefore, from the words under consideration, only that the old earth and heaven "pass away" in the sense of experiencing changes which fit them for the new and heavenly life of the redeemed, and that in this sense there will be "a new heaven and a new earth." *All* that is involved in this no one can safely undertake to show.—**And there was no more sea.** "*And the sea does not exist longer*," will be a literal rendering. The explanations proposed are numerous. The *Speaker's Commentary* groups them thus: (1) The sea exists no longer, because the "new earth" has arisen out of the fire (Beda, De Wette, Ebrard, Alford, Bisping); (2) The former "sea" has passed away, like the former "earth"; but this does not preclude a "new" sea, any more than a "new" earth (Düsterdieck); (3) The sea of the nations, the wicked, restless world (St. Augustine, Hengstenberg, Wordsworth); (4) Because in Paradise there was no sea, and here all is Paradise (Züllig); (5) Because no longer required to separate and keep apart divisions of the human race (Andreas, Gerlach); (6) The old *heaven* and *earth* of the former *Israel* having passed away, the *sea*, the emblem of the *Gentiles*, is no more (I. Williams). The *Speaker's Commentary* prefers the exposition noted as (3). The view of Carpenter seems substantially the same. Underlying this figurative sense, however, why may there not be a literal one, as in that of the new earth? The earth will be new physically, as well as in a higher and wider sense than simply a physical one, whatever that may import—in a high spiritual sense, involving all that belongs essentially to the new, glorious, and immortal life of its redeemed inhabitants. We doubt if it is consistent with the rules of correct interpretation, to treat the new earth as involving thus the literal with the figurative, and to take the word "sea" only in a sense strictly symbolical. All that which the sea has symbolized in various parts of this book will doubtless have passed away. But why not the sea itself, at least in so far as will satisfy the real import of the passage? The redeemed race will be one, no longer many, and no longer needing to be protected against each other's aggression by interposed oceans. The conditions of life will be changed, and that "highway of nations," now used for so many purposes, will be needed no longer. The physical uses of these wide watery tracts will be called for no more, under conditions so "new" as will exist in the "new heaven and new earth." We can see no serious objection to taking the words "there shall be no more sea," in the same blending of the literal and figurative, as in the sense of the new earth and the new heaven.

2-4. NEW JERUSALEM. THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH MEN.

2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, [a] the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall [1] dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, [2] *and be*

a Lev. 26: 11, 12; Ezek. 43: 7; 2 Cor. 6: 16; ch. 7: 15.—1 Gr. *tabernacle*....2 Some ancient authorities omit, and be *their God*.

of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The name, "John," should be omitted. The descending city is seen in vision. By "the holy city" we understand the redeemed church in its final felicity and glory. Its descent out of heaven belongs to the scenery of the vision, and symbolizes that manifestation of the church in this final heavenly state in which all the results of completed redemption shall gloriously appear. In the imagery here, as seen in connection with ver. 1, 2 of the next chapter, there is a blending of the city and the garden—Jerusalem and Eden. Both are used to represent the final state of the saved: Eden as implying the recovery in redemption of all that had been lost in the fall, and Jerusalem as implying the security of the redeemed. The garden had lain open to the tempter. Man's condition then was one of moral trial. Man redeemed will be safe forever. Of this, the walled city is the expressive symbol. The use of the city Jerusalem to represent this is eminently appropriate. Jerusalem was the central scene of the divine manifestation during the long ages of time. The temple and worship of the true God were there, and there only, in all the earth. The revelations of himself which God made during those centuries culminated there. When Christ, the God manifest, came, it was to this "holy city." Through its gates he passed, when that word to Zion was fulfilled: "Behold thy King cometh!" There he manifested his divine power and sovereignty. There, also, he suffered, "the just for the unjust." Over its doom he wept—the beloved city. Herein were types significant of great things, and in the *New* Jerusalem all these types are fulfilled, as we shall see. Commentators seem to puzzle themselves unnecessarily over the clause: "Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." If the marriage of the Lamb occurred before the millennium, they ask, how is it that now, after a period of a thousand years, she is still spoken of as the "Bride"? "It is rather awkward," writes Dr. Brown, "to suppose a bridal preparation and the presentation of the parties to each other, a thousand years after the union has been consummated." This is to invent difficulties. There is nothing said, here, of "a presentation of the parties to each other," neither is it said or implied that the church comes from heaven *as* a bride. The simile is used merely to describe the glorious appearance of what is seen, and is a simile purely. The marriage of the Lamb came in that consummation of his redeeming work which was seen in the millennium. His redeemed people now appear as "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy and without blemish," (Eph. 5: 27). This is all that the simile imports. The bearing upon this of ver. 9 will be noticed presently.

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them. Literally, "he shall *tabernacle* with them." The best manuscript also reads: "a great voice out of *the throne*." In ch. 7 occurs what resembles the closing words of our present passage, and yet differs. We there read, as in the correct translation, and in allusion to the redeemed, "God shall tabernacle over them," "shall spread his tabernacle *over* (ἐπί) them." Here we read: "God shall tabernacle *with* (μετά) them." It is the same general idea, but in the words now before us expressed in a specially emphatic way. What is said is that God will have his dwelling in the midst of them. —**And they shall be his people.** The word in the Greek is plural—"peoples." It will be noticed that the revision so translates. It would seem that a distinction is intentionally made between those who are "redeemed out of every tribe, and tongue, and nation, and people" (ch. 5: 9), and that one people who were anciently chosen, not as God's sole elect ones, but as a typical people foreshadowing the later "election of grace." This redeemed company is not only "a multitude which no man can number," but represents in its vast and various assemblages all the world's ages and "peoples." And these are all God's "peoples." Distinctions of nationality will

4 [a]And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and [b]there shall be no more death, [c]neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5 And [d]he that sat upon the throne said, [e]Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for [f]these words are true and faithful.

4 their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any
5 more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, [1]Write: for these words

[a] Isa. 25: 8; ch. 7: 17....[b] 1 Cor. 15: 26, 54; ch. 20: 14.... [c] Isa. 35: 10; 61: 3; 65: 19....[d] ch. 4: 2, 9; 5: 1; 20: 11....[e] Isa. 43: 19; 2 Cor. 5: 17....[f] ch. 19: 9.——1 Or, *Write, These words are faithful and true.*

no doubt have disappeared, at least in the old divisive sense, and still the fact seems to survive, in some form, that redemption had gathered its trophies thus widely, and thus without discrimination of race or clime.—**And God himself shall be with them, and be their God.** Alford translates, "and he shall be God with them." This would recall more vividly than either the common version or the revision, the saying in Matt. 1: 23: "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Possibly, too, it might suggest that amongst the redeemed in glory the God manifest will be the glorified Redeemer himself. The Sinaitic manuscript omits "their God" ("*and be*" being supplied in the translation where the words are retained). Westcott and Hort adopt this amended reading, although the revisers evidently have not followed it. Alford retains the words, translating, "and he shall be God with them, their God." In any case, it rather weakens, than helps, the force of the passage to supply, in translating, the words "and be." Alford's text, it should be added, differs somewhat from that used by the revisers; yet, even with his text, the translation proposed by him is a questionable one. It is safer to translate, as in the revision, "and God himself shall be with them." At the same time, it is quite proper to note in connection with these, the words in Matt. 1: 23, as illustrative of the meaning here.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. "*Every tear*" is more expressive.—**And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.** What shall *not* be in the heavenly state is scarcely less momentous to us than that which *shall be.* The words in the Greek are more forcible than in the translation. The word for "sorrow" means, strictly, "wailing." "It denotes," says Trench, "that grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid." It means, especially, mourning for the dead. "The 'crying,'" says Carpenter in Ellicott, "is the voice of despair and dismay, as well as sorrow." The emphatic words so used set forth the more vividly the contrast between the "former things" and those which in the new heaven and new earth shall be found.

5-8. THE LIFE ETERNAL AND THE SECOND DEATH.

5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. Lange evidently understands the great white throne, referring to ch. 20: 11; so likewise Alford. We do not see how this can be. That vision has passed wholly from the scene, and with it the throne, its Occupant, and the judgment. These are a part of "the former things" which "have passed away." It is better, in our opinion, to recall the fact that the throne described at chap. 4: 2, 3; in 5: 1; and in other places, remains through all this succession of visions as a fixed element in the Apocalyptic scenery. It is "out of" this throne that the "great voice" came, mentioned in ver. 3 of our present chapter, declaring to John and to us the significance of all this which thus passes before him in vision. It is now from the same throne that God speaks, saying, "Behold, I make all things new." It is declaring that time, the old earth, and the old state of trial, with its vicissitudes, its temptations, its pains, and its death, are no more. At the same time, offers of redemption, promises of grace, hopes looking to the future, and faith resting in a revealed word—these, too, are "passed away." Faith "is turned to sight," hope has come to a full fruition. Time, with all its offers and opportunities, is ended. The saved have nothing now to fear; the unsaved have nothing to hope.—**And he said unto me, Write, for** [*because*] **these words are true and faithful.** "Faithful ["*worthy to be trusted*"], and true [or "*genuine*"]." It is not the attending angel who speaks—if we suppose an attending angel throughout, as

6 And he said unto me, [a]It is done. [b]I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. [c]I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and [d]I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
8 [e]But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in [f]the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

6 are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life
7 freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my
8 son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part *shall be* in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

[a] ch. 16: 17....[b] ch. 1: 8; 22: 13....[c] Isa. 12: 3; 55: 1; John 4: 10, 14; 7: 37; ch. 22: 17....[d] Zech. 8: 8; Heb. 8: 10....[e] 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; Gal. 5: 19, 20, 21; Ephes. 5: 5; 1 Tim. 1: 9; Heb. 12: 14; ch. 22: 15....[f] ch. 20: 14 15.

some do—but the same voice from the throne. That which John is to "write" is the faithful and true words now spoken, especially those immediately following, which declare the final state of the righteous and the wicked.

6. And he said unto me, It is done. The Greek word is in the plural, and its literal rendering is, as in the revision, "They are come to pass." The word also translated "It is done," in ch. 16: 17, is the same word, but in the singular. The allusion there is to a specific incident in the order of Apocalyptic disclosure. Here it is, says Wordsworth, "the divine promises and judgments"; Lange, all the things before spoken (the λόγοι)—"they have become facts"; the *Speaker's Commentary*, "what the seer has beheld is now accomplished; the old world has passed away, the new earth has come into being"—expositions which are substantially equivalent.—**I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.** "The Alpha and the Omega" is better. This declaration has already occurred at ch. 1: 8, and again occurs at 22: 13, below. In the verse now before us it seems to be God the Father who speaks, as in 1: 8. In 22: 13, it is plainly the Lord Jesus, or some voice representative of him. The words following, in that place, "Behold, I come quickly," seem decisive on that point. It would appear, therefore, that these words, so expressive of that eternity of being which belongs alone to God, are in this book given as alike words of the Father and of the Son—consistently with that saying of the latter in the Gospel by the same writer, "I and my Father are one."—**I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life, freely.** We are reminded of the passage in Isaiah (55: 1), "Ho, every one that thirsteth"; also of our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria (John 4: 14). Those desires and longings of man's soul which the world never satisfies and never can, are in these cases, and in others, represented by the sensation of "thirst." The allusion is especially to those desires after spiritual good which the Spirit of God awakens. In the case of the saved, the soul's thirst shall be slaked at "the fountain of life." It is a perpetual, exhaustless, not intermittent, supply, like a fountain whose drainless sources never fail. Generation after generation, century after century, it gives drink to the thirsty. Such as this is "the fountain of life." It draws upon the "fullness" of God, and shall be exhaustless forever. And it is "free." Pre-eminently, *then*, will the words be true, "Whosoever will."

7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things. "Shall inherit these things" (ταῦτα). The "things" exhibited in the vision, including all that are yet to be mentioned, and all that has ever been the subject of divine promise.—**And I will be his God, and he shall be my son.** How wonderfully near to us does the divine Father come in this, and how tender are the words of assurance! The promise comes to a climax just as the fearful words of doom upon the unsaved are about to be uttered.

8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The amended translation in the revision will be noticed. By "the fearful" we must understand such as those mentioned in Heb. 10: 38; those who "draw-back," "shrink back," in the revision, and in the verse following, "them that shrink back unto perdition." There is no reference, of course, to that "fear and trembling" with which we are exhorted to work out our own salvation; nor to that

9 And there came unto me one of [a] the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee [b] the bride, the Lamb's wife.
10 And he carried me away [c] in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me [d] that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.
10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusa-

[a] ch. 15: 1, 6, 7....[b] ch. 19: 7; ver. 2....[c] ch. 1: 10; 17: 3....[d] Ezek. 48; ver. 2.

timorousness which an overcoming sense of unworthiness causes. Hengstenberg is far from being justified in quoting as any way in point those gentle rebukes by our Lord of his own disciples, for their "little faith." The man in the parable of the talents, who accounts his lord "an austere man" and is "afraid" and hides his talent in the earth, is more like what is intended here. Those also are included who "shrink back" from the "hardness" to be encountered in a Christian life, and from the self-surrenders, the cross-bearing made necessary. These cut themselves off from the benefits implied in the gospel offer by refusing its invitations. By the "unbelieving" must be meant rejecters of Christ, and especially scoffing unbelievers who make a mock of redemption and "do despite unto the Spirit of grace." The "abominable" are those who defile themselves with open and flagrant sin, like the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, idolaters, and liars next mentioned. These "go away into everlasting punishment," represented here under that same imagery which has already been used to describe the fate of the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon. It is a "second death." The first death was a sundering of body and soul, and separation from all in this life to which it is natural for men to cling most vehemently. The second death is the perdition of the soul itself, its separation from God, from heaven, and from the fountain of life—given over to the evil it has chosen, as the worst of punishments.

9-27. THE HOLY CITY DESCRIBED.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels that had the seven last plagues. It was "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials" that showed to John "the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters." It is now one of the same seven angels who shows to him "the bride, the Lamb's wife." In this seems to be implied the part these angels have in those "last things" which belong to the winding-up of earth's history and the manifestation of "the new heaven and new earth." The view is thus confirmed which treats the vials as belonging to the end of the Dispensation. That a like instrument is used in exhibiting to us those strongly contrasted figures—the Harlot and the Bride—makes the contrast itself more notable. It will be observed that the revision translates, "*who were laden* with the seven last plagues." We might translate, "who were full of." [Thus, the angels are said to be full of that with which the bowls which they had were, more strictly speaking, filled.—A. H.] The more intense expression is used, perhaps, to represent more vividly the nature of the plagues.—**And talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.** This refers to her who has before been spoken of as the bride, and is now the wife. In ver. 2, the simile of the "bride adorned for her husband" is used, as before explained, to describe the redeemed and glorified church. In the verse now considered, there is an allusion to what is said in ch. 19: 7-9, of the bridal splendor and the happy "marriage supper." The Lamb and the bride now appear, however, in the consummation of this high and holy union; it is "the bride, the *wife* of the Lamb."

10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain. The preposition (ἐπί) Alford prefers to render "upon" or "on to." This, at least, is implied. As in ch. 17: 3, we have the question to consider whether to translate "in the Spirit" — the Holy Spirit — or simply "in spirit." Perhaps the place in ch. 1: 10, to which we again refer the reader, may be allowed to decide here as in 17: 3, although the cases are not strictly parallel. But as in the latter place, so here, it is not the source of the influence of which John is conscious that is emphasized, but the effect, as giving him a new "ecstatic direction" (*Lange*). We do not suppose any bodily change of place, but that such a change *seems* to occur, be-

11 [a] Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

11 lem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her [1] light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as

a ver. 23; ch. 22: 5.—1 Gr. *luminary.*

cause of the change made in the Apocalyptic scenery. — **And shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.** It will be noticed that the revision has "the holy city Jerusalem." Before it has been called "the new Jerusalem"; now it is "the holy city Jerusalem." The descriptive word "holy" seems to anticipate what soon follows in the more detailed picture. We have already touched upon what is implied in the representation of the final state of the redeemed under the image of *a city.* The chief thing so intended seems to be *security.* It is a *walled* city. The imagery is based upon facts familiar to the age in which John wrote—familiar, in fact, in all history up to recent times. Every city must have its wall. Only thus could those dwelling in it be secure against robber hordes in time of peace, or assaulting armies in time of war; to one or the other of which in those troubled centuries they might almost always be exposed. Nothing is implied, here, of liability on the part of the redeemed to renewed assault from the hosts of evil, such as when, following the millennium, "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" were beleaguered by the hosts of Gog and Magog. A single thought is presented in this image of the city of the saved—that of *the completeness of their salvation.* Two points of difference are noted between the "holy city" as mentioned here, and "the beloved city" in 20: 9—it now "descends out of heaven from God," and it is "holy." Before it was "beloved," as it is now; but now it is indeed, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." All that is imported in the clause, "descending out of heaven from God," it may be impossible to show. There can hardly be a reference to what Paul says in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, of being "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," since the representation here is so wholly scenic. We may, perhaps, interpret the symbolism as setting forth, chiefly, two ideas: (1) the *perfection* of the final saved state—*heavenly* perfection; (2) that this perfection is "from God."

11. Having the glory of God. A "glory" caused by the immediate presence of God, and more fully indicated as to its nature in what follows.—**And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.** This is the light of "the glory of God," the splendor of the Divine Presence, having now its dwelling amidst the redeemed, as of old the Shekinah of the tabernacle and temple. Hence, it is literally her "light-giver" (φωστήρ), including, in this place, however, the light imparted, with the luminary that imparts. No radiance known on earth could fully represent the light of this City of the Blessed, save that of "a stone most precious"—that diamond lustre which combines with the "clearness of the crystal," the indescribable hue that makes "the stone most precious" fit to adorn the diadems of monarchs, and the most coveted of earthly things. It is not "the light of the sun" (22: 5), nor of any artificial illumination. It is light seen only in the immediate presence of God, and of which we can only say that the most glorious of earthly radiances are "like unto" it. On comparing the description of the glory of him that sat on the throne in ch. 4: 3, 4, with that of the glory of God in this verse, it will be seen that there is a marked difference. In the former it is said, "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." In the latter, the light of that glory "was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone most precious." The jasper, with its pure, clear radiance, is said to symbolize the holiness of God; the sardius, a red stone, his righteous wrath against iniquity and sin; the rainbow, his grace manifested toward the guilty. These were all in place in the former representation while sin was to be dealt with — impenitence to be visited with just displeasure, and grace to be shown toward the penitent. But in the New Jerusalem, as Gebhardt says, "Very naturally, the red sardius stone, as well as the bow like a green emerald, disappear, and only the jasper of crystal clearness remains as an image of God;

12 And had a wall great and high, *and* had [a] twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
13 [b] On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and [c] in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

12 crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve [1] gates, and at the [1] gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the
13 twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three [1] gates; and on the north three [1] gates; and on the south three [1] gates; and on the west three
14 [1] gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve

a Ezek. 48: 31-34....b Ezek. 48: 31-34....c Matt. 16: 18; Gal. 2: 9; Ephes. 2: 20.——1 Gr. *portals.*

for, with the end of the old world and its sins, the nature of God can no longer manifest itself either as wrath or as grace, but as holiness." In reading the verse, we should omit "and," as in the revision.

12. And had a wall, great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. "*Having*," etc., is to be substituted for "and had" in each place here. The imagery in the description which now follows seems to be, in some sense, a reproduction of that in the two last chapters of Ezekiel, which might be read with profit in this connection. The picture in this place, however, limits itself to the city, instead of including the whole land of Israel, as in the former case, and while mentioning some of the details of description in the older prophecy, adds others. Here, as there, the city has twelve gates; but we read here of "twelve angels," one at each gate.—**And names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.** So also in Ezekiel, the position of the gates, as assigned to the several tribes, being there indicated.

13. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. A like distribution is made in the older prophecy.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in [*on*] **them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** Of this, Ezekiel, a prophet of the law, has nothing to say. Such imagery was possible only when the gospel had come. This verse has afforded opportunity for some of the most extraordinary feats of modern "criticism." Thus, Rénan founds upon it evidence of John's "*hatred*" for Paul. Having (*L' Antichrist* p. 34), spoken of Peter and Paul as "chiefs of the opposing parties in the bosom of the church," he proceeds to say that "the author of the Apocalypse, on the morrow after the death of the apostles, at least of the death of Peter," is seen to be "of all the Jewish Christians, most hostile to Paul." In a footnote he gives his proof of this extraordinary statement, which is "above all," this passage in our book, "which excludes Paul from the number of the apostles." From which we are to understand that in representing the foundations of the city as *twelve*, instead of thirteen (the place of Judas among the twelve having been filled by the choice of Matthias), John necessarily excludes Paul from the apostleship! Upon that, "above all," Rénan rests his statement that "of all the Jewish Christians" John was "most hostile to Paul." A better example of the shallowness of so much of the vaunted "criticism," need not be desired. Other rationalistic writers note the passage now under view as proof that John cannot have been the author of the Apocalypse, since "thus to style himself a *foundation* would be inconsistent with apostolic modesty"—(the *Speaker's Commentary*, which names Lücke, Ewald, and Bleek, as making this objection). To all which it is sufficient to reply: (1) That the idea of a hostile collision between certain of the apostles, especially of Paul and John, is a pure fiction. How unsupported it is may be inferred from the fact that the chief point of proof, so far as Rénan is concerned, at any rate, is the passage now considered; (2) that there is no evidence of a question ever arising amongst the apostles as to whether Matthias should be regarded as completing the number twelve, or whether Paul should be admitted to the apostolic circle, either by supplanting Matthias, or by making up the whole number to thirteen. Paul names himself "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11: 13), and seems to have been strenuous only that in this office he should be regarded as having furnished "the signs of an apostle," so that his authority among the Gentile churches might not suffer. (3) There is here, especially, no possibility of

15 And he that talked with me [a] had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

15 apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, 16 and the [1] gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal.

[a] Ezek. 40:3; Zech. 2:2; ch. 11:1.—[1] Gr. *portals*.

a question like this arising. What we have is the description of a city seen in vision. Three features of it have, so far, been named —the wall, the gates, the foundation. Of the wall, we have already spoken sufficiently. The gates are said to be twelve, named for the twelve tribes of Israel; the foundations twelve—"probably," says Alford, "each portion of the wall joining two gates had a conspicuous basement, of one vast stone"—and upon these "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The twelve gates, with the names of the tribes inscribed on them, represent the church as the true Israel; the twelve foundation stones represent that foundation upon which the church is built; "the twelve apostles of the Lamb," in whom and by whom that truth is revealed on which the whole structure stands; "Jesus Christ himself" being "the chief corner-stone" (Eph. 2:20). "The symbolical character of the whole description," in the words of the *Speaker's Commentary*, "sets aside all reference to individuals, and lies apart from every conclusion based upon the meaning of the words taken literally"; (4) the attribution to John, in such a case, of a purpose to exclude Paul in a spirit of personal hostility from the number of the twelve, is therefore gratuitous to the very verge of absurdity; while to found upon the fact that he was himself an apostle, a difficulty as to John's authorship of the book, is equally trivial. John simply describes, as in other cases, what came before him in the vision.

15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. In this and the immediately following verses we have again a passage very difficult of explanation. It is important as a first point in the exposition to rightly conceive the purpose of the measuring. We have before had this act of measuring, in the case of the temple, mentioned ch. 11:1. In that case, we interpreted the act of measuring as symbolical of *protection*. The conditions are all different in the present case from what we found in the former one, and the symbolism must therefore differ. The purpose, here, is simply to *describe* "the holy city Jerusalem," as seen in the vision, and to convey, in terms of human language and in imagery drawn from the facts of earthly life, some idea of that glorious and happy condition of the finally saved, of which the city itself is a symbol. In no place throughout the whole book could a *realistic* interpretation be more entirely unsuitable and misleading than here. Much of the difficulty of the passage, besides, results from a leaning to such realism in expositions proposed. We will, on our own part, notice first the several details of the description.

16. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth. The measurement of the city in Ezekiel (48:30-35), reveals a like proportion there. In our English manner of speech, the clause, "and the length is as great as the breadth," would be tautology, since that is of course true of any "four-square" figure. The Greek word (τετράγωνος), translated "four-square," means, literally, "four-sided," or, having "four angles"; the following clause, therefore, is in a measure, epexegetical and explanatory.—**And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs.** "Twelve thousand *stadia*" would be more exact. The *stadium* was one-eighth of a *Roman* mile, and in that sense only would be properly represented by the word "furlong." —**The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.** Does this mean that each side of the city was twelve thousand furlongs, and the height the same? It should be noticed that it is said in the words next before quoted, "and he measured *the city* with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs." The most natural construction is that the entire circuit of the city had this extent, which would give three thousand furlongs, or three

17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
18 And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, *according to* the measure of a
18 man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold,

hundred and seventy-five miles, to each side. This is the view of Stuart, Alford, De Wette, and others. The statement that the length, breadth, *and height* were equal, involves a difficulty. That the city should be three hundred and seventy-five miles square is conceivable. That it should be the same in height seems well-nigh impossible, according to every realistic view of the case. "Everything shows, however," as Stuart most properly says, "that all *literal* exegesis in such a case as the present, excepting merely so far as to get a proper idea of the grandeur and the congruity of the imagery, is entirely out of question. . . . We are relieved by calling to mind that all is *symbol.*" As regards the vast extent of the city, apart from its height, the same writer notes "that subsequent parts of the description bring to view country as well as city."

17. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. "The measure of a man" means human measure; or such as men employ. The revision reads, "of a man, that is, of *an* angel." Some commentators, accepting this rendering, refer to the passage in Luke 20: 36, as a parallel one, where we read of redeemed men, that they shall be "equal unto the angels"; and "reckon and measure all things by a spiritual and divine arithmetic, and by a heavenly and angelic mensuration." This is Wordsworth's comment. Stuart's is far more likely to be correct. "It is an angel," he says, "who makes the measurement; and lest we might think it was a larger, or at any rate a different, measure from that in ordinary use (*ἀνθρώπου, of a man*), the writer expressly guards us against such an error." He takes the concluding words of the verse in the Greek (*ὅ ἐστιν ἀγγέλου, that is, of an angel*), as equivalent to *that is, the measure of an angel* (*ὅ ἐστιν μέτρον ἀγγέλου*), and accordingly translates, "which is that [or the measure] of the angel." The height of the wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, gives us two hundred and sixteen feet. Now, if we apply ourselves to gain from these details some distinct conception of what they import, we must begin by recalling the fact that John is here presenting to us, under imagery taken from earthly things and man's earthly life, a picture of the heavenly state as it shall finally be. Two main conceptions evidently appear in it—that of a city, with Jerusalem as the type, and that of a garden, a paradise, with Eden as the type. This latter will come distinctly in view in subsequent expositions. Stuart expresses it by saying that the description embraces "country as well as city." This, then, which we have before us is the home of that "great multitude" of the redeemed, as it shall be in "the new heaven and new earth." Bearing this in mind, and remembering that the whole scene is pictorial, we see a manifest reason for the *extent* implied in the measurement noted above. Various attempts have been made to explain the *height* of the city, so as to relieve the description in this particular of its difficulties. Luthardt, as quoted in the *Speaker's Commentary*, "supposes a city situated on a lofty mountain, with its houses in terraces around the mountain sides. The city would thus appear as a pyramid." Alford's view is similar—that the height of the city included the rock, or hill, on which it was placed, "thus recalling somewhat the form of the earthly Jerusalem on its escarpment above the valley of the Kedron." We prefer this to Stuart's suggestion that "in the mind of the seer it [the city] was regarded as containing mansions all of one height, and which, from the loftiness of this height, were fitted to hold almost countless myriads of inhabitants." If one considers what, from the measurements given, this height must be, the extreme difficulty of the conception will at once appear. The tremendous contrast, too, between the height of the buildings and the height of the wall, almost justifies Alford's characterization of this view as "too absurd to come at all into question." For some suggestions as to the symbolical significance of this whole passage—an element in the entire case of great importance—we refer the reader to the General Comments at the close of the chapter.

18 And the building of the wall of it

19 [a]And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: [b]and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
22 [c]And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

19 like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second,
20 [1]sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, [2]ja-
22 cinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve [3]gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several [3]gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure
22 gold, [4]as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and

a Isa. 54: 11....*b* ch. 22: 2....*c* John 4: 23.—1 Or, *lapis lazuli*....2 Or, *sapphire*....3 Gr. *portals*....4 Or, *transparent as glass*.

was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. The word here translated "building" (ἐνδώμησις), is a very rare one, found, indeed, only in one place in Josephus (*Ant.* 15: 9, 6), where the meaning seems to be, not "building," but "materials." Stuart understands by it, in this place, "superstructure"; that is, so much of the wall as was above the foundation. It is clear, at all events, that a distinction is made between this "building" and the "foundations" mentioned in the verses which follow. To represent the splendor of the city itself, it is here described as "of pure gold, like unto clear glass," which must be, as Alford expresses it, "ideal gold, transparent, such as no gold is here, but surpassing it in splendor."

19, 20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished [*adorned*] **with all manner of precious stones.** More literally, "*with every precious stone.*" The more particular statement next following, in some measure, explains this. — **The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.** The passage in Isa. 54: 11, 12, may be noticed in this connection: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows agates, and thy gates of carbuncles [lit., "*sparkling gems*"], and all thy borders [better, "*thy whole circuit*"] of pleasant stones." The numbering, in our present passage, of the several foundations—"first," "second," "third," etc.— refers, doubtless, to the spaces between the gates. The foundation, in each of these intervals, is represented as composed of a single vast stone, "precious" as described.

21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. The mention of transparent gold, like glass, reminds us of ver. 18, where it is said that "the city" was "of pure gold, like unto clear glass." The word in Greek for street (πλατεῖα) means, not the buildings, but the level way, doubtless here the pavement. It is to be noticed that while the foundations of the city have the variety here mentioned, the gates exhibit an equally remarkable sameness. Each of them is a pearl—a thing held in human estimation as most precious, which exhibits no such variety as precious stones do, and never needs embellishment at the hand of man. Of the symbolism implied in the precious stones of the city's foundations, and the pearl of its gates, we speak in the General Comments below.

22. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The word for temple (ναὸς) has here a like significance with that which we found in it at ch. 11: 1. The allusion is to the temple at Jerusalem, and more especially to that inner sanctuary, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. What we are told here is that in the New Jerusalem there will be no such sanctuary; and the reason, that "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." This must mean that in their communion with God and the Lamb, the redeemed of the new heaven and new earth will need no such *intermediaries* as are necessary in this world and this present life, and as were especially so in the times of the Old Dispensation—neither altar, nor victim; nor priest, incense, or sacred fire; nor sprin-

23 [a]And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.
24 [b]And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
25 [c]And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for [4]there shall be no night there.
26 [d]And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.
27 And [e]there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's [g]book of life.

23 the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it,
24 [1]and the lamp thereof *is* the Lamb. And the nations shall walk [2]amidst the light thereof: and the kings
25 of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the [3]gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for
26 there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it:
27 and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing [4]unclean, or he that [5]maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they who are written in the Lamb's

a ver. 11; Isa. 24: 23; 60: 19, 20; ch. 22: 5....*b* Isa. 60: 3, 5, 11; 66: 12....*c* Isa. 60: 11....*d* Isa. 60: 20; Zech. 14: 7; ch. 22: 5....*e* ver. 24....*f* Isa. 35: 8; 52: 1; 60: 21; Joel 3: 17; ch. 21: 14: 15....*g* Phil. 4: 3; ch. 3: 5; 13: 8; 20: 12.——1 Or, *and the Lamb, the lamp thereof*....2 Or, *by*....3 Gr. *portals*....4 Gr. *common*....5 Or, *doeth*.

kled blood. These were types, and in the New Jerusalem all will have reached their fulfillment; they were provisions for a state in which all things are seen "as through a glass, darkly"; in that perfect life which the redeemed live, they see "face to face."

23. And the city had [*hath*] **no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light** [*lamp*] **thereof.** In Hebrews (1: 3), we read that the Son is "the brightness" ["*effulgence*," *Revised Version*] of the Father's "glory." Some commentators, like Grotius and Ewald, put an unjustifiably forced construction upon what is said in this verse, when they explain it as meaning that "the glory of God" is the sun, and "the Lamb" the moon. The verse presents a single and simple truth—that the conditions of redeemed life will be so changed that the light of sun or moon will no longer be needed; the immediate presence of God irradiates the city of their abode, as now it irradiates heaven. It seems to be implied, however, that the *personal* manifestation of God in the midst of the redeemed will be the Lamb. "The glory of God" does not necessarily signify that God the Father will be thus manifested, but only that "glory" which indicates his peculiar presence, as the Shekinah of old. "The Lamb," however, is a distinct and conceivable personality, and it may be that in him peculiarly "the brightness of" the Father's "glory" may shine.

24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. The best Greek text omits "of them which are saved," and the words therefore are, in a correct translation, "*And the nations shall walk in the light of it.*" "Shall walk by means of her light," is Alford's translation.—**And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.** It is to be noticed that the tense of the verb is the present ("honor," τιμὴν, is here omitted by the revisers). Upon this, as we shall see directly, an important point of exposition is made to rest.

25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. It will be noticed that the revisers have included the second part of the verse in parenthesis. This seems to be correct; and the meaning becomes, accordingly, that if shut at all, the gates must be shut by day, since there is no night there; but as they are not shut by day, they stand ever open.

26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. With this seems to be connected, in meaning, that which immediately follows.

27. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth [*anything unclean*], **neither whatsoever** [*or, he that*] **worketh abomination, or maketh a lie** [*maketh an abomination and a lie*]; **but** [*only*] **they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.** Alford's comment upon the words, "And they shall bring the glory and honor [*costliness*, he translates], "of the nations into it," is: "Among the mysteries of this new heaven and new earth, this is set forth to us: that, besides the glorified church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations, organized under kings [referring to the words in ver. 24, 'the kings of the earth,' etc.], and saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city." His final comment, at the end of the chapter, is: "If then the kings of the earth, and the nations, bring their glory and their treasures into her [the

city], and if none shall enter into her that is not written in the book of life, it follows, that these kings, and these nations, are written in the book of life. And so perhaps some light may be thrown on one of the darkest mysteries of redemption. There may be—I say it with all diffidence—those who have been saved by Christ without even forming a part of his visible organized church." This last we may believe without accepting that view of this passage on which Alford has founded it. "The outlook of the prophet," says Carpenter, "is from the loneliness and depression of the then persecuted and despised Church; but in the vision he sees her beautiful and enlarged and honored. All nations and peoples flock within the walls; it is the echo of the ancient prophecies. 'All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall honor him.'" But do these words of the ancient prophecy point to the new heaven and new earth, and to the holy city, there, of the redeemed? Are they not fulfilled, rather, in the great events that usher in and attend the millennium? The view of Alford and Carpenter, alike seems to thrust in among the symbolisms of the glowing picture in this chapter realistic interpretations quite out of harmony with them. Will there be unconverted beings and nations on the new earth "saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city"? Are not "*all things*" made "new"? Will there be earthly pomps and grandeurs brought to the heavenly city by these "kings" when thus saved, and contributed to the enrichment of the new Jerusalem—the foundation of whose walls are precious stones, whose gates are pearls, and the streets and dwellings pure gold? It is clearly impossible to mix the realistic with the symbolical in this way. There will be saved kings in the heavenly city, without doubt—saved as others were, by belief in Christ. There will be "nations" of the saved, great multitudes, gathered out of every people and tongue and tribe under the whole heaven. All that was real and lasting in the glory of either nations or kings will be seen in the heavenly city; for there are attainments and achievements in this world which belong, in their highest nature and results, to eternity as well as to time. All these will enhance the beauty and glory and felicity of the heavenly city. It will not be alone the glory of God and the Lamb which shall make heaven and the city of the Lord what they are to be. Every one of the faithful and the saved will "bring" his own tribute; and those "kings" who feared God and wrought righteousness will *also* bring theirs. And these shall not be marred and dishonored by contact with the "unclean," or with aught that "maketh an abomination and a lie." The jeweled splendors of the city, and its streets and dwellings of translucent gold, symbolize its purity no less than its felicity. For only thus could that gladdening word become true, "The tabernacle of God is with men."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

We observe in the case of the "holy city," described in this chapter, that same alternation of the symbolism of a woman with that of a city, which we noted in the case of Babylon. In the early part of the chapter the angel says to John: "I will show thee *the Bride*, the wife of the Lamb." When this vision comes to be seen by him, it is "the holy city Jerusalem" which he beholds. This alternation in the symbolism makes it the more evident that, in neither case, ought any approach to realistic interpretation to be indulged. What is really meant, is neither a woman, an actual bride, nor a city, a material Jerusalem; any more than by Babylon was meant an actual, depraved woman, or an actual, wicked, and worldly city. The point is, perhaps, well-nigh self-evident, yet it is so important that it needs to be emphasized. What the chapter describes to us is the church of the saved—that "general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven"—in that condition of glory and felicity which has been promised to it, and which will, in "the new heaven and the new earth," become a possession forever. It is represented in the imagery of this chapter, now as "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," and now as a beautiful and glorious city, with foundations of precious stone, with gates of pearl, and with streets and dwellings of translucent gold. It cannot be, literally, *both* a woman and a city; in fact it is *neither*, save as seen in a vision. The fact underneath all, is the completely achieved redemption of all those who were given to the Son by the Father, and who, in the economies and methods of grace, are finally saved.

It is with the symbolism of *the city*, that we have chiefly to deal in the exposition of our present chapter. It is "the holy city Jerusalem." In other words, the basis of the imagery is found in that city of the Lord's chosen, in ancient times, standing on its steep height above the valley of the Kedron, with its walls, and palaces, and temple. As the angel is about to show to John the "*new*" Jerusalem, he takes him, we are told (ver. 10), "*to a great and high mountain.*" The greatness and height of this mount of vision seems to be emphasized, and require us to conceive of the seer as having, in the vision, an outlook over a vast extent, while from his own great elevation, what is said of the height, as well as what is said of the great length and breadth of the city, becomes more possible to our imagination. We are, perhaps, justified in viewing the situation of the seer, as being like that of an observer looking upon the actual Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives; only it is a case where the smallness of the reality on which the imagery rests, is to the grandeur of the imagery itself, almost as the infinitely little to the infinitely vast.

For we are to remember that what is before John in the vision, represents the results of redemption, not only in their glory and their beauty; but also in their *vastness*. "*Nations* walk in the light of" this city. It is the redeemed "out of every nation and people, and tongue under the whole heaven," whose heavenly state is exhibited to him in the imagery employed. If there be any proportions in the imagery to that which the vision represents, earthly conceptions as to the greatness of cities—even the greatest—must be dismissed, and we must try to bring our idea of the heavenly to some approach, at least, to that which the heavenly must be. An earthly city with dimensions such as are here described, is, of course, an impossibility; but far more an impossibility is it, to imagine the "nations" of the redeemed all gathered in any city ever yet built or inhabited by men. The chief difficulties in the chapter, in fact, arise out of the tendency to compare heavenly things with earthly, and to insist that the limitations of the earthly shall rule our conceptions of the heavenly. There is, in fact, but a single element in the whole description that occasions any serious difficulty. This is in the representation of the *height* of the city. This difficulty is partly met in the suggestion quoted from Alford and from Luthardt, that we may suppose "a city set on a hill"—fulfilling, in an infinite sense, that saying of our Lord in which his people are thus described, even in their earthly state. But the numbers here given are, we must also assume and remember, themselves symbolical. They are not representative of exact measurements; they simply present, under the image of such measurements, the great spiritual fact that the redeemed of the Lord are a countless multitude. Whatever city should be their abode, would require to be of an extent far surpassing any which men have ever imagined. In its compass, it would be like a great empire; in its height, towering upward far above the clouds. The distinction of the heavenly and the earthly seems to become lost in such a conception, and the imagination sees angels and men meeting upon the lofty pinnacles of the city, as if it were but the flight of a moment from the abode of the one to the abode of the other. Clearly, we must dismiss the materialistic from our conception of what this wonderful picture reveals to us, and try to imagine, in some imperfect way, things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

What we have said applies equally to the representation given of the city, in the foundation of its wall, its gates, and the gold of its streets and dwellings. What we must try to reach and grasp, is the *truth* beneath the imagery. (1) One part of that truth is the absolute *security* of the final heavenly state. Of that the wall itself is the symbol. (2) Another is the *realization* then, of that which here was only type, and promise, and provision. The description given comprehends, we find, both Dispensations. The names of the tribes enrolled on the gates, represent that ancient Israel, in whose history, whose law, and whose worship was provided such a rich array of types of better things to come. In the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, enrolled upon the several foundations between the gates, and on which the wall stood, is represented all that for the sake of which the apostleship itself was instituted—the revealed method of redemption on which our salvation stands. The very absence of the "temple"

CHAPTER XXII.

AND he shewed me [a] a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

1 book of life. And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of [1] the Lamb, in the midst of the street

a Ezek. 47 : 1 ; Zech. 14 : 8.—1 Or, *the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life.*

is indicative of the same thing now noticed. For the temple in ancient times, and as well the organized church and its ordinances and instrumentalities, in a later age, were indicative of things which were, in their form, to "vanish away," while their substance should be found again in that of which they were the types. These were things "in part"; "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." God's covenant of grace given to ancient Israel, and represented in our vision in the names of the tribes; and that revealed truth, committed to the apostleship for final revelation, in which this covenant took form as salvation and a Saviour;—these remain forever. In the new earth, they realize to the redeemed all that which in the old earth they had promised. But temples, and altars, and victims, and mediating priests, and even the ministers and ordinances of the later and truer sanctuary, are needed no more in a state where all that was foreshadowed by these, and provided in them, is realized in the direct communion of the redeemed soul with the redeeming God. (3) Another thing set forth in the symbolisms of this chapter, is the *perfection* of the final heavenly state. The pearl of the gates, the precious stones of the foundation, the gold of the dwelling and the streets—if the earth and the world had been ransacked for objects which might supply imageries of an absolute perfection, it is these, and only these, which we can imagine as serving that purpose in the very highest degree. Some writers instance the pearl of the gates as symbolizing how perfect, in itself and alone, is that way of entrance "into the city," which is "by Jesus Christ." This may, perhaps, not be an overstrained view. Certain it is, that as the pearl is always *one*, and never *many*, as is the case with the precious stone, so is there "none other name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved," but this; and as the pearl shines always in its native lustre, and never needs nor is capable of any embellishment at the hands of man, so are we saved, only and alone, by faith in the Saviour. (4) Allied to the perfection of the heavenly state is its *purity*, symbolized also in the fine gold, and the undimmed lustre of pearls and stones. It is yet more expressly indicative of this when we are told how all that is unclean and false, even the very shadow and semblance of it, never enters, nor even comes near to this "holy city." These shall "*in no wise* enter into it."

Jerusalem, the glorious!
The glory of the elect,
O dear and future vision
That eager hearts expect;
Ev'n now by faith I see thee,
Ev'n here thy walls discern;
To thee my thoughts are kindled,
And strive, and pant, and yearn!

The Cross is all thy splendor,
The Crucified, thy praise;
His laud and benediction
Thy ransomed people raise.
Jerusalem! exulting
On that securest shore,
I hope thee, wish thee, sing thee,
And love thee evermore!

O sweet and blessed Country!
Shall I e'er see thy face?
O sweet and blessed Country!
Shall I e'er win thy grace?
Exult, O dust and ashes!
The Lord shall be thy part;
His only, his forever,
Thou shalt be, and thou art!—*Bernard.*

PARADISE RESTORED.

1, 2. The River and the Tree of Life.

1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. There is a question of pointing as to this, together with the following verse. Tischendorf's pointing is the same as in the text used in our old version, with a period after the word "Lamb." The text of Westcott and Hort makes no pause at this word, but places a colon at (αὐτῆς), "it," connecting with the first verse the opening words of the second. With this punctuation, the first verse will stand thus: *And he showed me a river* [omit

"pure"] *of water of life, clear* ["bright," "brightly shining," is better] *as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street of it;* that is, the street of the city. It will be seen that the pointing of the revisers, above, is the same as this, with the exception that where the Greek has a colon, the revision has a period. The general sense of the passage does not seem to be affected by the difference in punctuation last mentioned; save that in the text of Westcott and Hort, the meaning is, perhaps, more clear. What John saw was, evidently, a brightly shining river flowing through the midst of the street — the "broad street" (πλατεῖα) of the city. This "broad street" of the city is in harmony with what is so usual in Oriental cities, and was no less so in ancient ones — the wide street running through the midst, the centre of city life and city traffic. The "river" recalls what is written of the original paradise, man's first home—how "a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence"—from the point where it left the garden, after traversing it from side to side, apparently—"it was parted, and became four heads" (Gen. 2:10). As we connect what is here said with what is mentioned in 21:23 of the city there described—"the glory of God did lighten it,"—we are reminded of these words in Psalm 36:7-9:

How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God;
And the sons of man may trust in the shadow of thy wings.
They shall be fully satisfied with the abundance of thy house:
And thou wilt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
For with thee is the fountain of life:
In thy light shall we see light.

[*Conant's Translation.*

Such experiences, in the measure possible, are granted to the Lord's redeemed people even now; the fullness of what is implied in this and in our own present text, however, comes only when God has "made all things new." When it is said in our passage that the river of the water of life proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," the general meaning is the same as in the words of David just quoted: "With thee is the fountain of life." The mention of the "throne" may have some reference to that sovereign good pleasure of God, according to which the grace of salvation, present and final, is dispensed; perhaps, also, to the fact that it is from him whose power and will are supreme in the universe, that the eternal life of the redeemed flows to them. There is special significance in the mention in unison of "God and the Lamb." In the Gospel, by this same apostle, this is a constant feature—the association of Father and Son, alike in the works of mercy wrought by the latter in his earthly mission, and in that infinitely greater work of redemption. A like association is seen here, as also where in the previous chapter it is said that the light of the city is the glory of God, and the Lamb its lamp, while the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. We find it characteristic of this apostle that he thus associates these Divine Persons in all that concerns the redeemed people, whether in the effectuation or in the consummation of the redeeming work. That the river is a "river of life," declares its symbolism. In the rich grouping of imagery found in the whole description, the river alike suggests the source, the fullness, and the exhaustlessness of that eternal "life" which comprehends all the elements of final and perfect blessedness. No more expressive symbol of this could be imagined than that of the flowing river, its limpid waters ever brightly shining, its source exhaustless, and its stream ever full, while along its banks blooms and verdures abound.—**And on either side of the river was there the tree of life.** "On this side of the river and on that" (ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν). Lange renders the Greek word for "tree" with the German word *Gehölz*, "wood," and adds this comment: "A collection of trees, having the common character of trees of life"; with the note of Düsterdieck quoted, that the word "generically denotes the entire mass of trees." In English, the word "wood" is often used in this way. Whether, however, the Greek (ξύλον) has this meaning, is more than doubtful. The original meaning of the word is the wood made from a tree; but in New Testament Greek it seems to be used as a synonym of the ordinary word for "a tree" (δένδρον). The writers just named were perhaps influenced in this rendering by a wish to represent, what is evidently correct, *many* trees instead of one; the picture being that of a river bordered with trees on either side Our word "tree,"

2 a In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* b the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* c for the healing of the nations.

2 thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was 1 the tree of life, bearing twelve 2 *manner of* fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves

a Ezek. 47:12; ch. 21:21....b Gen. 2:9; ch. 2:7....c ch. 21:24.—1 Or, *a tree*....2 Or, *crops of fruit*.

however, is often used in this way, the intention being to indicate, not the fact of a single tree, but that the trees, however numerous, are all of one kind—oak, maple, pine, or whatever else. So here; the trees bordering the river "on this side and that," were trees, or "the tree," of life.—**Which bare twelve manner of fruits.** The revision follows the old version in supplying the words "*manner of*," which are not in the Greek. Literally, the rendering is, "bearing twelve fruits. The *Speaker's Commentary* prefers to translate, "twelve *crops of* fruit": it quotes Burger as rendering, "a twelve-fold harvest of fruits," which is rather a paraphrase than a translation. Stuart renders, "producing twelve fruit-harvests"; giving to the Greek (καρπούς) this meaning of "fruit-harvests," which is a not unusual one. This seems, at all events, the idea implied, as the following words will show.—**And yielded her** [its] **fruit every month.** Thus, there would be, as Stuart argues, twelve fruit-gatherings every year. "It is," he says, "the *abundance* of the harvests, not the *variety* of the fruit, which the writer aims to describe." The passage in Ezekiel (47:7, 9), may be read with profit in this connection: "Now when I returned, behold, at the banks of the river were very many trees, on the one side and on the other. . . . . And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the waters shall come, shall live." In ver. 12 of the same chapter, we read of these trees that their "leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; *it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months*, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Like this last, are the words in our present text—**and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** Stuart seems to hold the same view as Alford with reference to the "nations" here mentioned. "The distant nations," he says, "may derive healing and life-preserving virtue from the leaves of the trees, carried abroad and distributed among them.". He refers to ch. 21: 24-26—Alford's comments upon which we have already noticed—and then adds: "where nations living at a distance are included in the new world." Bengel, in his comments upon the same passage, says: "This might throw some light on the question, how it shall fare in eternity with the heathen, who have not received the gospel." Hengstenberg thinks that this "is to be entirely rejected." He adds: "No intermediate state is to be thought of as possible, where all the circumstances are of a fixed character, and no room is left for change. We can the less conceive of a dwelling of the heathen outside of Jerusalem, since it is without this that the tree of life stands." The note in the *Speaker's Commentary* is: "The sense is clearly that the healing virtues of the tree of life supply the remedy for that sickness of the soul which troubled the "nations" during their earthly existence, but to which they shall no more be subject in the City of God." Alford's view is shared by De Wette, Züllig, and Ewald. Renan's characteristic comment is: "According to the author [of the Apocalypse, '*par excellence* the book of Jewish pride,' according to him] the distinction between the Jews and the Pagans will continue in the kingdom of God. While the Twelve Tribes eat of the fruits of the tree of life, the Gentiles must content themselves with a medical decoction of its leaves." He speaks of the words, "for the healing of the nations," as "*trait ironique*," an ironical turn of the phrase. Renan's frequent unintentional *reductio ad absurdum* might be a just cause of complaint for advocates of the "higher criticism." There is much of importance in Hengstenberg's reminder that in what these two last chapters of our book describe, "all the circumstances are of a fixed character, and no room is left for change." The first eight verses of the chapter preceding the present one are pervaded by this idea. "The former things are passed away"; "Behold, I make all things new"; "*He that overcometh*"—overcometh *now*—"shall inherit all things";

3 And [a]there shall be no more curse: [b]but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him:
4 And [c]they shall see his face; and [d]his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

3 of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be [1]no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his
4 servants shall serve him; and they shall see his

a Zech. 14: 11....b Ezek. 48: 35....c Matt. 5: 8; 2 Cor. 13: 12; 1 John 3: 2....d ch. 3: 12; 14: 1.——1 Or, *no more, any thing accursed.*

"The fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, *which is the second death.*" At the end of chapter twentieth we are told, as the final word in the description of that awful scene, the closing, judgment-scene: "If any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." The passage at ver. 11 of this chapter might be quoted to a like effect, did not its connection, as will be shown in the proper place below, assign it differently. Yet where, amidst all that presents itself in those which we quote, can room be found for even the possibility of continued offers of grace in the new heaven and new earth? We understand by the tree of life simply that which we have implied in the word "redemption." It is that same tree of whose leaves all now eat who believe in the Lord Jesus, and being "justified by faith," not only "have peace with God," but "rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; that "glory of God" of which we are told in this chapter. If it be allowable to make any distinction between "the leaves" and "the fruit" of this tree, we may say that the "leaves" had healed the hurt of sin in all those redeemed ones in that period when the gospel was preached to them and they had believed; while the "fruit" is that heavenly food which gives them immortality of blessedness. The allusion to the tree of life in the first paradise is evident.

3-5. SECURITY AND FELICITY.

3. And there shall be no more curse. The marginal translation in the revision ("thing accursed") represents more exactly the force of the Greek word (*κατάθεμα*). The clause here seems to present much the same idea as that which we have in ch. 21: 27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it [the city] anything unclean, or he that maketh abomination and a lie."—**But** [*and*] **the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.** Here we have again the same association of divine Persons as before. The representation in all these places appears to be that the personal form of the divine manifestation will be that of the Redeemer. He reigns amidst his people as their King, in the "glory" of the Father, and in that glory which he had *with* the Father before the world was.—**And his servants shall serve him.** The "his" and "him," considered with reference to the plural antecedent, imply the oneness of God and the Lamb—the Father and the Son (John 10: 30). Upon the words, "his servants shall serve him," Lange's translator, Rev. E. R. Craven, has a singular note. He says: "There seems to be a great and blessed truth conveyed by the conjunction of (*δοῦλοι*) *servants*, and (*λατρεύσουσιν*), *shall serve.* His *slaves* shall be elevated to the dignity of *temple-servitors.* The idea is akin to that presented by our Lord (John 15: 15), 'Henceforth I call you not servants (*δούλους*), but *friends.*'" The Greek word here named is never used in the New Testament, where it applies to the servants of Jesus Christ, in the sense of *slaves.* Shall we translate Paul's phrase, so frequently employed, "the servant of Jesus Christ," "the *slave* of Jesus Christ?" The translation, "his slaves shall serve him" expresses an impossible idea. The words, "his servants shall serve him," mean, simply, that they who have served him here will serve him there. The redeemed life is a life of service, not one of holy idleness, were that even possible. The word *λατρεύσουσιν* (*shall serve*), in this place, implies holy service.

4. And they shall see his face. Implying intimacy of personal communion and intercourse.—**And his name shall be in their foreheads.** *On* (*ἐπί*, with the genitive), their foreheads. In ch. 3: 12, we have the promise, "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, new Jerusalem." They whose state of final felicity we are now considering realize the fulfillment of this promise. Again in 14: 1, we read of the hundred forty and four thousand with the Lamb on

5 [a]And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for [b]the Lord God giveth them light: [c]and they shall reign for ever and ever.

5 face; and his name *shall be* on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign [1]for ever and ever.

a ch. 21; 23, 25....b Ps. 36: 9; 84: 11....c Dan. 7: 27; Rom. 5: 17; 2 Tim. 2: 12; ch. 3: 21.——1 Gr, *unto the ages of the ages.*

Mount Zion, "having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads." The meaning, in all these places, is for substance the same. In the passage last quoted, it will be seen that the revision, following the text of Westcott and Hort, has "his name," as well as "his Father's name." This appears to be the true reading, and it affords another instance of the association of Father and Son in all that concerns the salvation of the elect. Our present text has, simply, "his name"; but this is like what we find in ver. 3, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and *his* servants shall serve him"—where the "his" evidently includes both God and the Lamb, viewing them in the oneness of their essential being. So in the verse now studied, "his name" applies to both God and the Lamb in the same way as "his servants." The "name in the forehead" is a symbolical expression, in contrast with that "mark of the beast" of which we have seen so much in former chapters. It implies how entirely those redeemed ones belong to him who has redeemed them. They are "his own."

5. And there shall be no night there. "*There shall be night no longer*," is more exact, and more expressive. Night is to man, in his present state, in some sense a sign of imperfection. It is for him a season of rest and slumber; but the very fact that he *needs* rest and slumber is a token of that which came upon him when it was said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." It is also a season of darkness, in which wild beasts prowl, and wicked men steal abroad to plunder and kill. It is an image of the night of the grave, as sleep is the "brother" and image of death. In the new earth and the holy city, service will bring no fatigue, and they who serve will need no hours for slumber and repose. Darkness will never visit them; for as the city hath no need of the sun, so there will be no experience of either the sun-setting or the sun-rising. Nor among the dwellers in the holy city will there be any to need the cover of darkness for their deeds. How much of this description is to be viewed as symbolism, and how much indicative of changed physical conditions, it may be impossible to decide. The case is like that of the new heaven and new earth, where under all the spiritual meanings of the picture given, *something* realistic seems necessarily to be understood. We are to remember, nevertheless, that what John beholds appears to him in vision. It is not in itself reality, but pictorial representations of that reality which is to be. The essential thing to be understood by it all is the fact that whatever in man's present state implies imperfection, will be so changed in that prepared world in which the final home of the redeemed is to be, as that these "former things" will have "passed away."—**And they need no candle** [*no light of lamp*]**, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth** [*shall give*] **them light.** Virtually a representation of 21: 23.—**And they shall reign for ever and ever** [*unto the ages of ages*]. The same note of eternity is used here as in passages which describe the fate of the condemned. The word for "they shall reign" (βασιλεύσουσιν) means, strictly, "they shall be kings." The same word, only in a past tense, is used at 20: 4, "and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Here, as there, we understand that the redeemed share the kingship of him who has redeemed them. The nature of this kingship we infer from the nature of his kingdom. "He [Christ] shall reign," we are told, "till he hath put *all enemies* under his feet"; for God "hath put *all things* under his feet" (1 Cor. 15: 25, 26). He is to "abolish all rule, and all authority and power" . . . "that God may be all in all." In Rom. 5: 17, we read how "they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through Jesus Christ." *All* that is implied in this, we cannot hope even to conjecture now. The word "reign" points to many conditions of the redeemed state with which it is impossible that we should now become acquainted. Enough for us to know, at present, that the "kingdom" won by the suffering Lord, and

6 And he said unto me, [a]These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets [b]sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

6 And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants

[a] ch. 19: 9; 21: 5.... [b] ch. 1: 1.

in which he now reigns, will, in its consummation and final glory, be shared with his "called, and chosen, and faithful." Even now, in some sense, they reign with him. In the victories, and conquests, and resulting dominion of that grace of which they are at once the prophets and the dispensers, they even now share—all of which, it may finally appear, are "shadows of the good to come" (Heb. 10: 1).

6-20. THE EPILOGUE.

6. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true. In 21: 5, we have the same declaration as to the genuineness and trustworthiness of these communications. The Greek words used (πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί), have special significance. "*Trustworthy and genuine*" is a good rendering of them. The connection in this place seems to indicate that they are, as here used, intended to cover all the communications made in the book of these revelations. The words next following show this.—**And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.** "*The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets,*" is according to the amended reading. The words are equivalent to, "The Lord God by whom all the prophets were inspired"; a declaration, in effect, that this New Testament prophecy, this Book of the Apocalypse, has its inspiration at the same source as the Old Testament prophecies. The expression, "spirits of the prophets," is peculiar. Alford understands, "those spirits of theirs, which, informed by the Holy Spirit, have become the vehicles of prophecy"; Carpenter, simply, "the God whose Spirit moved the holy men of old to speak"; Hengstenberg, "the Spirit of prophecy which rested on them." "The Spirit itself," so the *Speaker's Commentary* interprets here, and correctly, "is the same for all; but each prophet has his own measure of the Spirit's gift." Düsterdieck understands each prophet's own spirit, "which God moves and teaches [*erregt und unterweist*] by his Spirit." He does not agree with De Wette in making the allusion the same as in 1 Cor. 14: 32: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Hengstenberg's view appears to be the more correct. According to this, the meaning will be, "The Lord God who bestowed upon each of the prophets that measure of the Spirit's gift which each enjoyed, sent his angel," etc. The words, "sent his angel," recall ch. 1: 1, "He sent and signified it [the Revelation] by his angel unto his servant John." Alike there and here the implication seems to be of an actual angelic agency employed in these revelations. We should understand by this, if accepting it, that an angel was present with John through all, and that his agency was concerned, more or less, in that condition of John himself, which made such revelations possible for him, and in the various changes of the vision. To him, also the office would fall of interpreting, so far as this was permitted, the meaning of the successive appearances on the Apocalyptic scene. We should, in this case, recognize the angelic attendant in ch. 1: 1, 10; 21: 5; also here and in ver. 8 and 16, below. The point cannot, perhaps, be fully settled, although what we have suggested seems probable. But who is it that speaks, at the beginning of the verse, where we read, as in other places, "And he said unto me"? If it is the attendant angel that speaks, he must do so representatively; for the words in ver. 7 point unmistakably to the Lord himself.—"Must shortly be done," at the close of the present verse, should be, as in the revision, "*must shortly come to pass.*" Here, again, we have the repetition of a phrase in ch. 1: 1. This return, throughout the verse, to thought and language so identical with what appeared at the opening of the book, shows that "the Revelation" proper has now reached its close. What was announced in those opening verses has been completed; the vast scheme of the future has passed in vision before this "servant" of the Lord, through whom so much of the things that must come to pass "shortly"—beginning with the time then present, and reaching on to the end—as was consistent with divine purpose, were to be made known to his fellow "servants" of each successive

7 [a]Behold, I come quickly: [b]blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
8 And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, [c]I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
9 Then saith he unto me, [d]See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

7 the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.
8 And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who shewed me these
9 things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book: worship God.

a ch. 3: 11; ver. 10, 12, 20....*b* ch. 1: 3.....*c* ch. 19: 10....*d* ch. 19: 10.

century down to the time of the end. What follows now in the book, though John receives it while still, as at first, "in the Spirit," is less in the nature of a "Revelation," and more in that of a concluding message, summing those lessons of the whole book which every Christian of every age will need to receive and to ponder. As the opening verses of the book were styled the Prologue, those with which the book ends are, in the same sense, the Epilogue.

7. Behold, I come quickly. These are, clearly, words of the Lord himself, whether speaking personally, or representatively, through the angel. There is much difficulty in tracing with certainty the personality of the speaker, not only here, but in subsequent verses. It may be that the phraseology reflects, in some measure, a certain indistinctness of this nature in the vision itself. This is the more likely to be true, if we may suppose that, the "Revelation" proper being concluded, the trance-like condition of the seer, described in the phrase "in the Spirit," now gradually changes to a normal one. It is certainly the Lord who is as if speaking in ver. 16 of this chapter, "I Jesus have sent mine angel," etc. The words now immediately considered must also be understood in a like way. It must be the Lord himself who is to "come quickly."—**Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.** This is a reiteration of the value and importance of what the book contains, implying also that its source is divine. It might seem as if the many attempts to disparage the book, since made, had been anticipated, while a blessing is pronounced upon those who view and use it aright. It is distinctly termed a "prophecy," and so a place is claimed for it amongst those divine communications whose messages are so momentous, and whose character and source entitle them to such reverence.

8. And I John saw these things, and heard them. The present participle of the verb is used, in each case, with the article before the "hearing" (ἀκούων)—the order in the Greek text, as amended, differing from that used in the old version. The revisers render more correctly: "And I, John, am he that heard these things, and saw them"; or, perhaps, we might give it literally, "*am the person hearing and seeing these things.*"—**And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.** It will be useful to connect the whole representation, here, with what we have in ch. 1: 20. Our exposition there, has, we trust, made it seem pretty certain that the attendant angel, and that other glorious Person, "one like unto the Son of man," were *both* present in that opening scene of all which this book describes. The "voice like a trumpet" is the voice of the angel; the "voice as the sound of many waters" is the voice of the Lord. In the passage now immediately before us (ver. 6-16), there is no intimation that if both Jesus and the angel are present, both are *seen*. The words spoken, however, seem to be in one place words of the angel; in others, words of the Lord.

9. Then saith he unto me. It is evidently, from what follows, the angel who "saith," **See thou do it not,** ["*see not*, as in 19: 10].—**For I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.** Clearly, this is not the same being as he at whose feet John "fell" (ch. 1: 17) "as dead." He at whose feet John now falls, does not address him in those august words: "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forever more, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death." John is now forbidden to offer any act of worship; the person he sees is an angel, who, as at ch. 19: 10, announces himself as a fellow-servant, alike of

10 [a]And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: [b]for the time is at hand.
11 [c]He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the
11 prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness [1]still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy [1]still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness [1]still:

a Dan. 8: 26; 12: 4, 9; ch. 10: 4....b ch. 1: 3....c Ezek. 3: 27; Dan. 12: 10; 2 Tim. 3: 13.——1 Or, *yet more.*

the apostles, such as John ("thy fellow-servant"), and "of the prophets"; he is one of those to whom "the sayings of this book" are a law and a testimony, as they are to John and to all his "fellow-servants" of every age. At the same time and in this connection, as we shall see directly, that same voice which John at the first heard saying: "I am he that liveth and was dead," is now again heard, saying: "Behold, I come quickly," and, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel." We will notice this again, further on.

10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. To Daniel it was said (ch. 12: 4): "Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and *seal the book*, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The command to John is: "*Seal not* the sayings of the prophecy of *this* book." The difference is occasioned partly by a difference in the *time* at which the prophecies of Daniel and of John were respectively given, and partly by the fact that they belong to different dispensations. To Daniel it was said (12: 9): "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." In the verse before quoted from the same chapter, we are told how at this "time of the end" many "shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." John's mission as a prophet belongs to this "time of the end"; the time in which there should be increase of knowledge, and when a study of the prophet's word, as of all other words of God, should be fruitful and profitable. Daniel's prophecy, also, belongs to the dispensation of type and shadow; John's to that of substance and fulfillment. Many things were "sealed" under the law which are open under the gospel, to every reverent and prayerful student of the word. The clause, "the time is at hand," is equivalent to "the time of the end has come" —the time of the gospel, and of those final dispensations of God, in which alike the prophecy and the promise, the types and the emblems of the former Dispensation, shall reach their fulfillment.

11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. As intimated above, these words, as they often are, might be quoted in direct evidence of the *fixity* of that final state of misery, or of felicity of which, in the previous chapter, and in the earlier verses of the present one, such indications appear, and in the same express way, were it not that the connection requires a different general sense. The vision of the judgment, the vision of the new heaven and the new earth, with that of the holy city Jerusalem, are, all alike, now closed. The discourse is, now, not of them; but of the "book" of which the description of these scenes forms a part, with directions to John as to the use he shall make of the revelations he has received. It is in this connection that the words: "He that is unjust [unrighteous] let him be unjust [let him do unrighteousness] still" etc., are spoken. They are words which apply *in connection with* the directions given to John, with reference to these revelations, and the solemn assurances made to him of their genuineness and truthfulness. We must understand them as defining —as is so often done in the New Testament— the respective attitudes toward these, as toward all other words of God, of the two great classes of mankind, and as laying upon each individual human being the full responsibility of his course with reference to them. What they seem to mean is, "He that will persist in unrighteousness, after all of instruction and appeal that may be addressed to him, let him do so; he that clings to his filthiness, let him have his strange choice; while if any will be righteous and holy, all motive, all opportunity, and all gracious help shall be allowed them." The words assume that each human being to whom these messages come, exercises his power and privilege of choice between "the cursing and the blessing" which are set before him as the two great and awful alternatives. There is thus, indeed, implied the idea of *finality* in the results of this

12 [a]And, behold, I come quickly; and [b]my reward *is* with me, [c]to give every man according as his work shall be.
13 [d]I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
14 [e]Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right [f]to the tree of life, [g]and may enter in through the gates into the city.
15 For [h]without *are* [i]dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

12 and he that is holy, let him be made holy [1]still. Behold, I come quickly; and my [2]reward is with me,
13 to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last,
14 the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have [3]the right *to come* to the tree of life, and may enter in by the [4]gates into
15 the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and [5]maketh a lie.

[a] ver. 7....[b] Isa. 40:10; 62:11....[c] Rom. 2:6; 14:12; ch. 20:12....[d] Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; ch. 1:8, 11; 21:6....[e] Dan 12:12; 1 John 3:24....[f] ver. 2; ch. 2:7....[g] ch. 21:27....[h] 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19, 20, 21; Col. 3:6; ch. 9:20, 21; 21:8....[i] Phil. 3:2.—1 Or, *yet more*....2 Or, *wages*....3 Or, *the authority over*....4 Gr. *portals*....5 Or, *doeth*.

choice. What he chooses, while the opportunity of choice remains to him, will become *destiny*, and be changeless forever. This is further implied in what is next said.

12. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. This verse connects itself directly with that which precedes. "To every man," to the "unrighteous" and to the "filthy," to the "righteous" and the "holy," a "reward," a return, a recompense of glory or perdition, shall be given, "according as his work shall be." In view of the solemnity of these utterances, we cannot think it right, with Lange, De Wette, and others, to imagine "something ironical" in the words: "he that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still, he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." The tone of the whole passage seems to us too much in keeping with the awful nature of the alternative thus announced among these last of the words of inspiration, to allow of such an interpretation. Upon what is implied in the words: "Behold, I come quickly," in this verse, and in ver. 7, with the added ones, "my reward is with me," etc., we must take space for more extended comment than is possible here, and refer the reader, accordingly, to Excursus F, at the end of this chapter.

13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Almost word for word, what was said by the "one like unto the Son of man," whom John saw at the first. It is the being who has just said: "I will give unto every man according as his work shall be"; and it reminds us of those words of our Lord which this same apostle has before recorded in his Gospel (ch. 5:22, 27): "For neither doth the Father judge any man; but he hath given all judgment unto the Son. . . . . And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." (*Revision*).

14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. These are thought by some, to be words of John himself, as if in a kind of response to those which had just been addressed to him. They should probably be so taken. The change in the revision of "that do his commandments," to "that wash their robes," is warranted by the reading alike in the Sinaitic and the Alexandrine manuscripts, and is followed by the text of Westcott and Hort. Wordsworth, on exegetical grounds, thinks that the old form should be retained. But surely the manuscript authority, in a case like this, should decide. In the changed form of the clause, the doctrine implied is more evidently in consistence with that general doctrine of the New Testament, which makes all the benefits of redemption dependent upon the application of that "blood of Jesus Christ his Son," which "cleanseth us from all sin." The clause, "have right to the tree of life," points us back to Gen. 3:34. That "flaming sword" which "kept the way of the tree of life," is sheathed for those who have part in that "redemption," which is "by the blood of the Lamb." In the same work of redemption, the gates of the city are thrown open to them, and they may "enter in."

15. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh [*doeth*] **a lie.** The changes in the revision will be noticed. Such as here described is the company they must keep who have neither sought nor received that "washing of regeneration," nor have ever, through faith in Jesus, obtained the right to enter in through the gates into the city.

16 [a]I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. [b]I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* [c]the bright and morning star.
17 And the Spirit and [d]the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. [e]And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things [1]for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.
17 [2]And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

a ch. 1:1....b ch. 5:5....c Num. 24:17; Zech. 6:12; 2 Pet. 1:19; ch. 2:28....d ch. 21:2, 9....e Isa. 55:1; John 7:37; ch. 21:6.—1 Gr. *over*....2 Or, *both*.

16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. "*For* (ἐπί, with dat. *over*, or *for*) the churches"; "over," in the margin of the revision. Like sayings quoted above, this must be by Jesus himself. Even if it be thought that the angel speaks as in the person of the Lord, representatively, his identity in so speaking loses itself in that of him who announces himself as "I, Jesus." For all practical purposes, the nice exegetical point involved need not be insisted upon. Both here and in those places where it is said so repeatedly, "Behold, I come quickly," we may feel that we hear the words of the Lord himself. The words following in the verse, "have sent mine angel," etc., authenticate the whole book as from the Lord himself. At the same time they indicate its purpose. Its mission is "for the churches." As a message to them, involving prophecies of things to come, warning, encouragement, inspiration, hope, it is to serve down to the time of the end itself, as the testimony of him who is "the faithful and true witness."—**I am the root and the offspring of David.** The second of these, "offspring," Düsterdieck treats as epexegetical of the first, "root." Christ is the root of David, in the sense of being his offspring. The word for offspring (γένος), means originally, "race," but is often used of race in the sense of offspring. Our Lord, in the words he uses, refers to his human lineage, an allusion quite in harmony with the use of his name "Jesus," in the connection; the only instance, throughout the book, in which he speaks of himself by this name. He is speaking here, therefore, in that nature and office which he assumed in his earthly mission, and in that relation to his people into which he entered, when in his human birth there was fulfilled in him that word of Isaiah (ch. 11:1): "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Stuart claims for the Greek (ῥίζα), the same meaning as at ch. 5:5, "root-shoot," which does, indeed, make the word here harmonize better with that in Isaiah.—**And the bright and the morning star.** Better to omit, "and," in both cases, and read: "the bright, the morning star." We may connect with this what we have at ch. 2:28, "I will give him" (him that overcometh) "the morning star." Stuart says: "It is the splendor and beauty of the morning star, which makes it here an object of comparison with the splendor of the King in Zion." It is doubtful, however, if this exhausts the symbolism. The morning star is the herald of the day. It is peculiarly the symbol of *promise*. We may see in it, by anticipation, all that the day is to bring. Even such is Christ to the soul. Such was he in the type, and promise, and prophecy of the Old Dispensation; and when in his actual advent he rose amid the dawn of a New Dispensation, it was as the harbinger of all that which the gospel has been to men, and which comes to the full in the new heaven and new earth—the "perfect day."

17. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. We notice that nearly all the commentators appear to understand the "Come," in this verse, as a call for the coming of the Lord. "In response," says the *Speaker's Commentary*, "to the Lord's announcement in ver. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly,' the universal church, the Bride, inspired by the Holy Ghost, answers, 'Come'." But do the remaining parts of the verse harmonize with this?—**And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.** The two last clauses, certainly, cannot be understood as expressing a "wish and prayer" (Stuart) for the coming of the Lord. They are invitations. Can we suppose such an abrupt change from the one thought to the other, with no intimation of change? Besides, the words are words of Jesus, and they come in much closer connection with the sixteenth verse than with the

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, [a] If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, [b] God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of [c] the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

18 I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add [1] unto them, God shall add [1] unto him the plagues
19 which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, [1] which are written in this book.

a Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6....b Ex. 32:33; Ps. 69:28; ch. 3:5; 13:8....c ch. 21:2.—1 Gr. *upon*....2 Or, even from *the things which are written.*

twelfth, as cited by the commentators. It seems to us that the verse should be understood throughout as implying invitation. In ver. 16, Jesus announces himself as sending his angel to "testify these things for the churches." He makes himself known in those characters which cause him to be the hope of the world. And now, in that connection, the mission of the Spirit and the church are declared. It is to *invite.* This is the gospel message, "Come"; and the *breadth* of the message appears in the great words, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Thus are the gospel message and the gospel invitation emphasized in these final words of the whole Bible.

18. For I testify. It is John who now speaks. "For" should be omitted.—**Unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book.** "That is," says Lange, "every one who is present at the reading of the book aloud in the church." There seems to be no good reason for such limitation. The warning and the threatening which follow, are set over against the benediction in ch. 1:3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Surely, neither the benediction in the one case, nor the threatening in the other, were exclusively for the reader and the hearer in public services of the apostolical churches. Was it by them alone, or even most of all, that such a warning was needed? We must suppose the language used to take in all who in any manner become acquainted with what this book contains.—**If any man shall add unto these things.** Unless we take the "any man," as meaning any man whatever, in whatever age, we limit the whole lesson of the passage to the age in which it was written; but if we give the words breadth enough to embrace all men in all times, then the "any man" is really epexegetical of "every man that heareth." What shall be understood by "add unto these things"? Some (Vitringa, Bleek, etc.), understand careless transcribers; others (Ewald, De Wette), "oral inaccuracies of repetition"; Düsterdieck understands a falsifying of the revelation. Ebrard regards the words as "the seal which Christ himself impresses upon the Apocalypse." Hengstenberg says: "That such additions and omissions are here referred to, as belong to the proper kernel of the book, such as would substitute for the *narrow* way presented in it a *broad* one, or would in some respect extinguish the light of hope that shines in it for Christians, as was done by Hymenæus and Philetus, who said that the resurrection is past already (2 Tim. 2:17); this will not for a moment be doubted by any one who has discerned the spirit of this book." Alford thinks that "the adding and the taking away are in the application and reception in the heart. All," he says, "must be received and realized." And he adds that "this is at least an awful warning both to those who despise and neglect this book, and to those who add to it by irrelevant and trifling interpretations."—**God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.** It cannot be such a light matter as many suppose to treat the word of God irreverently, or to make it the foot-ball of critical prejudices and fancies. The judgment denounced is severe; but is not the sin of so perverting the words of divine revelation as to mislead and ruin souls great? The reference cannot be to such mistakes of apprehension or exposition as human infirmity is liable to, but to those purposed corruptions or infidel disputings of the word which hostility to the truth, and to God himself, may prompt.

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book [*the tree*] **of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things**

20 He which testifieth these things saith, [b]Surely I come quickly. [c]Amen. [d]Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
21 [a]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

20 He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.
21 The grace of the Lord Jesus[1] be [2]with the saints. Amen.

a ver. 12....b John 21 : 25....c 2 Tim. 4 : 8....d Rom. 16 : 20, 24; 2 Thess. 3 : 18.—1 Some ancient authorities add *Christ*....2 Two ancient authorities read, *with all*.

which are written in this book. Acts such as are here, and in the previous verse, condemned, do not stand alone, in any case. Deliberate and purposed corruption or denial of divine truth, indicates a state of the heart, and is wont to accompany other evidences of that "mind of the flesh" which is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The words, "take away his part," must mean the same as "deny him any part." The whole passage, therefore, should be viewed as indicating an entire condition of heart and life, and the consequences which follow when this is persistent, incorrigible, and unchanged to the last. Such treatment of "the words of this book," as is described and condemned, is only one out of many signs of that condition to which no word of promise, but many a word of warning, is spoken.

20. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. "He which testifieth" is Jesus, testifying these things for the churches. He is to "come" again, and "quickly." "For the time is short"—short, measured on the scale of eternity.—**Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus.** The response of faith, and hope, and longing. Omitting the "even so," lends much of additional force. The apostolical benediction closes the book.

21. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [*of the Lord Jesus*] **be with you all. Amen.** Thus with the words of blessing the volume of inspiration ends; even as, when our Lord ascended in view of his disciples, "while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven."

GENERAL COMMENTS.

As far as to the twentieth chapter, we have been able to find, in the history of the past, or in aspects of the present, what might at least illustrate for us the deep, and often obscure, meanings of the visions we have studied. From the beginning of the twentieth chapter to the close of the book, we are, whatever may be thought in that respect of previous ones, certainly dealing with things yet future. And these future things are of a nature to make any interpretation of what is written of them so much the more difficult. It is only to a certain extent that, at the best, we may hope to seize the clue to a safe and right exposition.

One of the questions which a careful expositor finds confronting him, is the question, how far he is to treat all these pictures, especially those in the last three chapters, as strictly symbolical; and, therefore, to be viewed purely *as* pictures, with a meaning and a lesson to be sought under each one; and how far, upon the other hand, he must recognize the real and actual as intermingling with, or underlying all. Points like these present themselves in our study of those passages which relate to the millennium, to the first and second resurrections, the general judgment, the new heaven and new earth, the final state of the saved and lost; while, as we shall see in the Excursus below, similar difficulties offer themselves in connection with that coming of the Lord, which is the subject of such frequent and emphatic mention. The view we prefer to take is, that the symbolism of the book is pervasive and constant, from beginning to end. The scenes represented are scenes beheld in vision; the figures that appear in them are symbolical and dramatic; the language used is, to a great extent, the language of allegory and symbol. Great movements, great epochs in history, mighty forces, evil or good, periods of time, sometimes indicated by numbers, sometimes not—these are the things dealt with, yet always representatively, in symbol and picture.

At the same time, we are not to view this symbolism as of such a nature as to leave only a vague and unreal result. There is to be a blessing in knowing and "keeping the sayings of this book." Our Lord appoints and uses a special angelic ministry to "testify these things for the churches." There is something to be learned from the book, and something to be "kept"; some instruction, help, stimulus, warning, hope, which shall

prepare the Lord's people—especially his people of the latter day—for the Lord's work. There is a certain *realistic* element which must, in a right way, be after all sought; and this, from time to time, *shows through* the veil of the symbolical and representative. This realistic element we have endeavored, with due care, to trace, and so to bring out those salient features in each vision, which compose its lesson. Thus we hold to a real millennium, insisting only that its nature shall be rightly understood; to a real resurrection, urging, meanwhile, that its true character, and its true place in the great events foreshadowed, be not mistaken; to a real judgment of quick and dead, though declining all attempt to describe it in detail, or to say how much of the dread picture of it that is given us, shall be seen as literal, and how much as imagery; to a final happy state of the redeemed in a prepared world, and to a final fixed condition of the lost—recognizing the highly pictorial and figurative nature of the descriptions given; and confessing that as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," so is it impossible for us to know precisely *how* his justice will be vindicated in the punishment of his enemies. The unrevealed "secret things" involved, especially in the latter, we are glad to leave with him who will "do right."

The remarkable manner in which the wonderfully rich symbolism of this book rests back upon Old Testament type, and history, and vision, and prophecy, we have often had occasion to notice. The fact comes before us in the concluding portions of the book, in a form peculiarly interesting. Two things in the Old Testament, and in that Dispensation of which it is the record, present themselves to us as in an especial way central and significant. Eden and Jerusalem—the Paradise which man lost by his fall, the city to which the Redeemer came, and where he suffered in fulfillment of that promise concerning "the seed of the woman"—about these how much of the history of man's need and the divine provision in his behalf, gathers and centres! Each is a type, in the substance of which all the types find their fulfillment; the one, of what the divine kindness prepared for man in creating him; the other, of that grace through which, in such large measure, the calamity of the fall is repaired. We are not surprised, therefore, when we find these two great types combining in the symbolism of that picture, in which the final issues and fruits of redemption are revealed to faith. And each is needful to the other, that the picture may be complete. The city must show how *safe* the garden has become; the garden must symbolize the beauty and felicity of redeemed man's final home. It must be there, with its river of life and tree of life, as the city must be there with its engirdling and protecting wall.

"I am not sure," writes Bossuet, in commenting upon this part of our book, "if any portion of Scripture can be found in which terrors and consolations are better intermingled than they are in the these last two chapters. There is everything to attract in the most blessed city; all in it is rich and glorious; but everything is also fitted to inspire one with dread—for here we perceive still more of purity than of grandeur." We should especially note the truth of the concluding observation. The gold of the streets and the dwellings, the clearness "as crystal" of the brightly shining river, the pearl of the gates, the precious stones of the foundation—these all are in harmony with the express statement made that into this city no manner of unclean thing shall ever find admission. It is to be noticed, also, that one conspicuous object in the original paradise is not seen in the city and garden of the redeemed—*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* Not only as the symbol of man's moral trial, his probation, does it have no place where that probation is at an end, but also as significant of temptation and of possibilities of evil to man could it have no place here. Only "the tree of life" is seen bordering the river. Evil, thenceforth, will survive in the universe of God only in its own prison-house—a memorial forever. Forceful, indeed, is that admonition of an inspired apostle, coming home to us in this connection: "What manner of persons ought we to be," since we look for such things "in all holy living and godliness?"—(*Revision.*)

Readers do not need to be reminded how much attention is given, just now, to the question as to possibilities of a probation in man's future state. We must emphasize the fact that indications of such a probation cannot, as we trust our exposition has shown, be

found anywhere in this book, and, least of all, in the closing chapters, without forced interpretations, to which the careful student should give no entertainment. Indeed, the teaching of this book especially enforces the saying of Paul, with its momentous lesson: "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." The conditions of the present life are all adjusted to its purpose as *a probation*. The conditions of that life of which such impressive pictures appear in the pages of this book, are those of a state final and fixed. In that state, whether it be of the saved or of the lost, "the former things are passed away."

EXCURSUS F.—THE COMING OF THE LORD.

The exposition of the remarkable writing with which we have in previous pages been occupied, ought not to finally close, without a somewhat more careful study of one important subject, to which attention has repeatedly been incidentally directed. It is not our purpose to enter at large, here, into the question of our Lord's second coming. That would require such a treatment of the general doctrine of the New Testament on this subject as must tempt us to transcend our province as expositors of one only of these books, and would lead to general discussions lying, more or less, apart from the duty assigned to us here. We shall, accordingly, limit ourselves to a review of the subject so far as it comes before us in the book we are studying. Two main points of inquiry will be kept in view: (1) What does the book teach, or cause us to infer, as to the *certainty*, and the *nature* of our Lord's Second Coming? (2) What does it teach, or cause us to infer, as to the *time* of this coming, with reference to that other great event, the millennium? Will it be *pre-millennial* or *post-millennial?* We have briefly intimated the view we are led to take upon these subjects, in the Introduction. A more deliberate and extended examination of the teachings of our book with reference to them, must now claim the attention of the reader.

It may have already been noticed that the *express* allusions, in the Apocalypse, to the coming of the Lord, as still future, are found only in the opening and closing chapters of the book. Three several times in the last chapter (ver. 7, 12, 20), we have the words, "Behold, I come quickly." As we treat much of that chapter in the light of an Epilogue, that distinct and emphatic utterance becomes, in that view, a re-affirmation of the solemn announcement in ch. 1: 7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen." (*Revision*). These words are evidently descriptive of that judgment of the great day of which we are many times warned in Scripture, and the coming of the Lord which they announce is manifestly a coming to judge the world. It is a coming that must be actual, personal; one that shall be visible, majestic, and momentous to "all the tribes of the earth." It seems a fair conclusion that it is of this the Lord himself speaks, when three several times in the closing chapter of the book, we find him saying, "Behold, I come quickly."

With a view to see how this conclusion may be sustained by the results of inquiry, we propose here to examine the several passages in the Apocalypse where allusions to the Lord's "coming" occur, arranging them in three classes, as, *first*, those in which this event is expressly mentioned; *second*, those in which it is implied; *third*, passages in which it is foreshadowed.

I. PASSAGES IN WHICH THIS EVENT IS EXPRESSLY MENTIONED.

The words in ch. 1: 7, and in ch. 22: 7, 12, 20, have already been quoted. A like express mention, or at least indication, will be inferred by all who, with Alford, understand in this way the "Come," at the opening of each of the four first seals. We need not repeat the considerations which led us, in our exposition, to understand the word in that place quite differently from this. In ch. 3: 11, however, we read: "I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The words occur in the epistle, or message, to the Church at Philadelphia. The language is so far identical with the utterances quoted from the last chapter of the book, that the passage seems to belong with those, although there may be allusion in them to other forms of the Lord's "coming," be-

sides that which is to occur at the end of the age, or dispensation.

These three—some may think that we ought to include in the group those merely in chapters first and twenty-second—are the only places in the book in which the second coming of the Lord is mentioned in a manner so express and definite as to leave no occasion for doubt as to the meaning. The fact may appear surprising to one who, in studying the book, seems to see that great event continually in the horizon of the far and dim future, and to perceive a continual movement of human history, in its eras and epochs, its great streams and tributaries, on toward that "final appearing." The reason seems to be found in the very nature and theme of the book itself. It is not history, like the Gospels; it is not doctrinal and experimental teaching, like the Epistles. It is prophecy, and prophecy cast in the form of vision and picture. Its great theme is the Kingdom of God, in its origin under Christian organism and manifestation; its ordeal, amidst conflict, suffering, and many calamitous vicissitudes; its progress under better auspices as the latter day draws on; and its final glorious victory and beatitude. Much of the book—all the intermediate chapters—is occupied with the fortunes of this "Church of the Living God" in its militant state. The Apocalyptic stage is crowded with figures and with incidents representative of that which should become history as the ages and centuries rolled away. From time to time glimpses of the end are seen—foreshadowings, as we shall note presently; but that *end of the Dispensation* is not yet, in these intermediate chapters, distinctly the theme of prediction, and so we find nowhere in them any express mention of that which is, beyond all else, to characterize this event—the coming of the Lord.

Now, if we view the three-fold utterance, "Behold, I come quickly," in the last chapter, as a re-affirmation of what is so solemnly announced in the first, the meaning in the one place must be the same as in the other. The question may arise, how then the coming of the Lord could be to John himself an object of such desire as is expressed in the closing words of the book, where, in response to the "I come;" we find him eagerly calling, "Come, Lord Jesus!" There are those who think that the words in allusion to Christ's appearing in judgment, "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of him," imply that even to the redeemed of the Lord, themselves, that event will be one of awe and of self-humiliation, if not of terror. In any case, it may be urged with force and justice, how can what is in its nature rather terror-striking than joyful, and necessarily charged with awful consequences to great multitudes of mankind, be even to one who has no real reason to fear it an occasion of longing desire? The answer to this would be that the coming of the Lord, even his coming to judge the world, is the central event in a great series of events, the contemplation of which is adapted to inspire the spiritual mind with other emotions than those which the contemplation of the judgment alone would awaken. We must suppose that of the things brought to John's attention in these closing visions, it is not alone the great white throne and the judgment of quick and dead that dwells in his memory and fills his thought. Beginning with what the twentieth chapter records, we have a succession of pictures, than which nothing could be more glorious and inspiring. In these, John had revealed to him the end and the consummation of that in whose beginning he had himself so largely shared, and whose history during centuries was to be such a scene of vicissitude and ordeal. He sees the Kingdom of God in the splendor of its final triumph, and the nations of the saved in the beatitude of realized redemption. So far from having connection with the judgment alone, and so associated with ideas of awe and terror only, the thought of the Lord's coming is in association with all these glories and felicities of the new heaven and earth, and the holy city in whose fadeless light the redeemed enjoy eternal day. It is that he may "bring with him" all this, that John responds to the promise with the longing cry, "Come, Lord Jesus!" It would seem, too, that at some such point of view as this, the "coming" was contemplated by all the apostles. And, indeed, this question whether the Lord's coming will be strictly pre-millennial or post-millennial, does not seem to be a vital one in the way that many appear to suppose. While the actual personal manifestation of which such frequent mention is made, may occur in connection with that final great assize in which judgment

is pronounced, and every man goes to "his own place," there is a sense in which the ushering in of the millennium itself is a "coming of the Lord." The closing part of the nineteenth chapter, the appearance of the glorious Rider on the white horse, points to events in which, without any personal manifestation, there may be such a "revelation of Jesus Christ" as will characterize one of the most glorious eras in the whole history of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the millennium itself seems clearly brought on by such a display of divine power in connection with a world-wide preaching of the gospel as must far transcend all that has before been known in the experience of the militant church. This, too, foreshadows that final consummation which comes at the judgment; and so, in a certain way, the beginning and the close of the millennium constitute one "revelation of Jesus Christ," in which he first appears in the wonderful victories of conquering grace, and in the other revealed "from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess. 1: 8. *Revision*).

We have no right to expect that this will meet the views of those who hold to a personal second coming as the ushering event of the millennium. It, however, indicates our own convictions as to the manner in which that "blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2: 13. *Revision*), is exhibited under a more express form in the book we are here studying.

II. PASSAGES IN WHICH THIS EVENT IS IMPLIED.

We group, here, passages such as the following: "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (ch. 3: 5. *Revision*); "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (3: 21. *Revision*); "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken in shivers" (ch. 2: 26, 27. *Revision*); "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (ch. 19: 6, 7. *Revision*); "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne: and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books" (ch. 20: 11, 12. *Revision*).

We copy these passages in full, in order that their mutual and general bearing may be the more readily seen. There is no express mention in them of any coming of the Lord, yet their full meaning cannot be reached without assuming that event as implied. The promises to "him that overcometh" of recognition in the presence of the Father and the angels; of reigning with Christ in the consummation of his kingdom; the announcement of the marriage of the Lamb, indicating that final union of Christ and his church which reaches its fullness only when at last "he shall come to be admired in all them that believe"; and above all, that judgment of the great day in which our Lord is himself the Judge, since "the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son"—these all imply, each in its own way, that event of which such more express mention is elsewhere made. It is to be noticed, however, that the only further implication, as to the *time* of this coming with reference to the millennium, is in the last of the passages mentioned (perhaps, also, in 3: 5, where occurs the promise of recognition in the presence of God and the angels), and what of implication we find there, certainly favors the view of those who believe that the actual, personal, and visible second coming of Christ will be when he comes to judge the world.

III. PASSAGES IN WHICH IT IS FORESHADOWED.

One of these is ch. 7: 9–17, where we read of the "great multitude that no man could number. . . standing before the throne and

before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands" . . . who had "come up out of great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These "serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them," etc. We speak of this passage as *foreshadowing* the event to which we refer, because the whole incident, as it appears to John, is symbolical and anticipatory. The sealing of the tribes had just taken place, and this next succeeding picture anticipates and foreshadows the final result of that sealing, which is to be a "multitude" of saved ones past all possibilities of enumeration, in a condition of holiness and felicity, perfect and eternal. No personal manifestation of the Lord in a second advent is anywhere in the passage announced, nor even distinctly implied; but when we connect the passage with others, we see that it anticipates that whole series of crowning events, as the consummation of human history in this world, in which that second coming of the Lord fills so large a place.

Another like passage is that which describes the sounding of the seventh trumpet, with what followed upon that. We have tried to show in the exposition that what is written there (ch. 11:15, *et seq.*) should not be interpreted as primarily and expressly descriptive of events of the last day. The voices in heaven, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever," announce an *epoch* in the history of the kingdom of God and of his Christ, rather than the *closing chapters* of it—a new manifestation and exercise of divine power in the kingdom of grace, thenceforth to become more and more express and victorious, until all opposition shall be subdued, and evil itself shall be swept from the scene, and imprisoned forever. In the exposition we have preferred to adopt, the age in which we live falls within this period of the advancing and victorious kingdom of God, while at the end of the period will be found in their consummation the things foreshadowed in the words, "the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward unto thy servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.' In some sense, these words have a present fulfillment, but the supreme fulfillment will come at the end; and connected with it, as parallel Scriptures show, will be the Lord's own personal second coming.

Of like purport, in their ultimate meaning, the passages seem to be which we find at the end of the fourteenth chapter, descriptive of the harvest and the vintage; and again at the end of the sixteenth, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth, descriptive of the final destruction of Babylon. These events belong to the closing scenes of the Dispensation, including the millennium, with the events that bring it on, the last judgment, in which the final visitations of divine justice come upon the world of wicked men, with the devil and his angels, and the ultimate supreme triumph of holiness in the universe of God. These are all foreshadowed, and as belonging with them the "revelation of Jesus Christ" in his second glorious coming.

RESULT OF THE INQUIRY.

From what has now been said as to the direct and inferential teachings of our book with reference to the coming of the Lord, we draw these conclusions: (1) That it teaches us to expect, at the end of the age, or Present Dispensation, an actual, personal second coming of Christ; (2) That this book does not *expressly* declare the *time* of this second appearing of the Lord, with reference to the millennium, that is to say, whether it shall be pre-millennial, or post-millennial; (3) That inferentially, it connects this advent with the general judgment, and so makes it post-millennial; (4) That the attitude of the book, as a whole, toward the doctrine of the Lord's second coming, is quite in keeping with its attitude toward Christian doctrine in general. Perhaps there is no book of the New Testament that is more thoroughly *evangelical* in tone, and in its underlying doctrine, than the Apocalypse; at the same time, it is not, in any sense of the word, didactic. It is a poem, rather than a treatise. And still, it would be difficult to name any fundamental truth of the gospel which does not here find recognition. Scarcely any book of the Bible so clearly and forcibly sets forth our Lord's divinity. His incarnation and vicarious suffering are often brought to

view in the most vivid terms of pictorial representation. Redemption by faith in his blood is the theme of repeated heavenly choruses which John, in describing, almost makes his readers, themselves, hear. Personal holiness as a token of applied redemption; and electing and covenant grace as at the head of all—these are not more clearly taught by Paul himself then is done in this book, so thronged with imagery and symbol. And yet, express and formal doctrinal teaching is nowhere in it to be found. As with reference to Christian doctrine in general, so of the doctrine of our Lord's coming. The book is nowhere didactic or formal in its teaching upon this subject; yet in the ways which we have tried to indicate above it treats the event as sure, while giving us some intimations of its nature and of its relation to other events belonging, like itself, to the "end of the age."

The word "quickly," used so repeatedly by our Lord in this book when announcing his second coming, harmonizes perfectly with the general New Testament view of this event, and with representations of it by our Lord himself in certain of his parables. The word has no polemical value either for those who hold to a pre-millennial coming, or for those who place the great event a thousand years later. If it is to be taken absolutely, it is as difficult of explanation, really, for the one of these theories as for the other; since not even can a coming to usher in the millennium be, strictly speaking, a coming "quickly." It seems to have been the Lord's intention that the attitude of his church during the whole period between his Ascension and his Return, should be an attitude of *expectancy*. And in a true sense—although not in a limited, temporal sense—this return "to take account of his servants" would in each age, even in that of the apostles themselves, be "near." Measured on the scale of God's great plan, "a thousand years are as one day." We have no right to assume that he will estimate his own periods by those intervals of earthly time which, however, they may seem to us, are in truth but as seconds on the dial of eternity.



PATMOS.